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Edited by W. H. HUTTON, B.D.

GENERAL WOLFE



# GENERAL WOLFE

BY

EDWARD SALMON

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE EMPIRE," ETC.

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

ON the 13th September will be commemorated the 150th anniversary of the death of General James Wolfe on the heights of Abraham. Of all the lives indelibly associated with the history of the Empire, certainly of the heroes of the eighteenth century, none has perhaps been so little "done" as that of the Conqueror of Quebec. The romance of Quebec has been described till it is almost a nursery tale, but among biographies of Wolfe there are only two that claim special attention—one, Wright's, which appeared more than sixty years ago and is necessarily out-of-date; the other, Mr. A. G. Bradley's, which appeared fourteen years ago and consequently could not include valuable material made more readily available in the interval. Francis Parkman, most indefatigable of searchers after hidden records, in his *Montcalm and Wolfe* added much to Wright on the Canadian side, and in his turn has been supplemented by Mr. A. G. Doughty, the Canadian archivist who has given us six big volumes, *The Siege of Quebec. The Military Life of the First Marquess Townshend*, by Col. C. F. V. Townshend, alone would seem to justify a new "life" of Wolfe; it revived old controversy and misled many. Miss Kimball's *Correspondence of Pitt with Colonial Governors and Naval and Military Commissioners in America* has placed many of the treasures of the Archives at the command of the student who cannot go to them for himself. But it is extraordinary that from the

*Gentleman's Magazine* of 1759 down to Miss Kimball and Mr. Doughty, frequently though Wolfe's marvellous despatch of the 2nd September to Pitt has been published apparently at length, it has never been given in England without some qualification. In Canada it was given, I believe, in extenso, by Brymner in his *Report on the Canadian Archives* for 1898. Miss Kimball omits two passages—for no obvious reason—and three words, the absence of which makes a material difference. To the best of my opportunities I have gone to the originals and the despatch is now printed in an appendix, exactly as Wolfe sent it off. Among more general histories, the most important, from the point of view of Wolfe's work, is Mr. Julian Corbett's masterly study of "amphibious" strategy—combined naval and military operations—in *England in the Seven Years' War*. Mr. Corbett, in his study of the Stopford-Sackville MSS., seized upon a very interesting and material fact in the record of Wolfe which no biography has contained hitherto. It has sometimes struck me as remarkable that Macaulay did not find in Wolfe's life the *motif* of at least one glowing passage in his Essays, if not of an Essay itself. He only mentions him twice, so far as I am aware. Disraeli did not even mention him in that striking speech of the stranger in the forest inn to Coningsby which ends, "The history of Heroes is the history of youth." Wolfe was more a case in point than either Nelson or Clive.

I cannot return thanks individually to the many friends who have acted for me almost as so many skirmishers in attacking the subject. From those near at home to others who could have no personal

interest in myself, I have received invaluable assistance. My good friend, Mr. J. R. Boosé, the Librarian of the Royal Colonial Institute, devoted much precious time to assisting me in clearing up points of difficulty ; to Messrs. Pearson & Co., the dealers in Rare Books and Manuscripts, I owe a special debt for their generosity in permitting me to make use of the hitherto unpublished letters of Wolfe to Miss Lacey. Most of Wolfe's letters are in the possession of the descendants of his friend Warde, who still occupy Squerries Court ; Wright made use of them, but did not wholly exhaust their interest as Mr. Beckles Willson, the Canadian writer who to-day lives in the house which the Wolfes occupied at Westerham, has shown. To handle the two Lacey letters was a rare privilege.

I have pointed out some mistakes in the various accounts of Wolfe, and can only hope I have avoided pitfalls myself. My object has been to tell Wolfe's life story, to set that story in the framework of national history, and to place facts beyond dispute so far as my individual limitations permit. Mistakes in regard to the events of Wolfe's career seem inevitable. Even the inscription on Schaak's picture of him in the National Portrait Gallery is wrong ! It says he fought at Fontenoy—a mistake which J. R. Green in his *History of the English People* (vol. iv, p. 188) endorses. Green, in the one page he devotes to the conquest of Canada, has two misapprehensions and three distinct errors in his references to Wolfe. That such things can be, makes one wonder sometimes whether Truth is the sovereign passion of the historian, as Disraeli said it was of mankind.



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# GENERAL WOLFE





# GENERAL WOLFE

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## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH, SCHOOL, AND FIRST COMMISSION

✓ No surer proof of a man's greatness is needed than the rival claims of localities to the distinction of his birthplace. In the case of James Wolfe the city of York and the town of Westerham, separated as they are by two-thirds of the length of England, have been unequal contestants for the reflected glory. How York ever came to imagine that it had any more than the remotest connection with an event which was to mean so much to British Imperial history, it is impossible to say. The tradition was long since disposed of. Yet last year, when Quebec was celebrating not merely the exploits of Cartier and Champlain and Frontenac, but of Montcalm and Wolfe, York reasserted its claim and gave illustrated accounts of the house, now an inn, where Wolfe was born.<sup>1</sup> General Wolfe's mother was a Yorkshire lady, a daughter of Edward Thompson of Marsden, and at the date of Wolfe's birth, his grandfather apparently was living in the house in York which some men of that city to this day point out as Wolfe's birthplace.

**The Claim  
of York.**

Fortunately the wisdom of Solomon has not to be invoked to determine the truth. The evidence as to Westerham is complete.<sup>2</sup> James Wolfe was born in

**Westerham**

<sup>1</sup> *The Yorkshire Herald*, 18th July, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Only recently it was stated that Wolfe was born at Ferneaux Abbey, Kildare, so that Ireland as well as Yorkshire claims him.

that picturesque, even to-day rather-out-of-the-world, Kentish village, on the 22nd December, 1726, Old Style, or the 2nd January, 1727, New Style. As tradition has endeavoured to give him two birthplaces, so his early biographers were prepared to give him two birthdays. The Rev. G. R. Gleig fixed the date at the 6th November, 1726. Nor can the mistake be attributed to the confusion wrought by the New Style of reckoning time, introduced in 1752. James Wolfe was baptized in the parish church, according to the register, on the 11th January, 1726, which appears to be nearly twelve months before he was born, until we remember that the new calendar dispensed with eleven days and made the year begin with the 1st January instead of three months later. The date of baptism therefore in the New Style, would be 22nd January, 1727.

The  
Vicarage.

On yet another point biographers are not quite agreed. He was not born, as some have stated, in the old Tudor house, which his father had taken at Westerham, then called Spiers, now familiar as Quebec House. He was born at the Vicarage. His earliest biographer, Robert Wright, who published the fullest account of Wolfe's antecedents and career that we have, said that Lieutenant-Colonel and Mrs. Wolfe were living at the Vicarage, which they had rented from the Rev. George Lewis.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Beckles Willson tells a circumstantial story which shows that the birth at the Vicarage was more or less inadvertent. Colonel Wolfe was away on duty with his regiment and Mrs. Wolfe living alone for the moment at Westerham had made an afternoon call. She was taken ill, the good Vicar and his wife insisted that she should

<sup>1</sup> Wright: *Life of Wolfe*, p. 6.

remain,<sup>1</sup> and the Vicarage in consequence enjoyed the distinction of hearing the first sound uttered by lips whose words of command in the days to come were to carry with them the fate of peoples.

James Wolfe came of venturesome stock. His genealogical record is unfortunately incomplete. His great-grandfather—who is variously described as George and Edward—was the descendant of the Woulfes who settled in the south-west of Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century. In 1650 the Woulfes roused, or assisted to rouse, the citizens of Limerick to oppose the Duke of Ormond when he wished to enter in order to defend the city against Cromwell's forces. One of the Woulfes was a Franciscan friar, the other an army captain. Both were proscribed, but whilst the friar was executed, the captain escaped to the North of England, dropped the "u" from his name, became a good Protestant, and married. Of his son we know nothing, but his grandson—the relationship has never been called in question—was Edward Wolfe the father of the hero of Quebec. Edward Wolfe was gazetted second lieutenant of marines when he was fifteen, became a captain in Temple's Regiment of foot at eighteen, and was one of Marlborough's brigade majors in the Low Countries at twenty-three. He served with Wade in Scotland in the rebellion of '15, and two years later, when he was thirty-two—the age at which his son James died—received his commission as Lieutenant-Colonel. The professional opportunities which came to James Wolfe were denied to his father, but there were resemblances in the two careers up to a point. Without social influence, both father and son rose

Wolfe's  
ancestry.

<sup>1</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 23rd July, 1908.

rapidly in a profession where wealth and family connection were a surer road to preferment than zeal and ability; both fought in Flanders and assisted to put down rebellion in Scotland; both made their mark by devotion to duty, their courage and resource in warfare, their efforts to improve in the hour of peace the instrument to which there must be appeal in any national crisis. The elder Wolfe's opportunities for distinction were sharply defined by Walpole and his policy of peace; the younger Wolfe got his chance when Pitt determined that war, war at any cost of life and treasure, war in any part of the world where the French could be found, was essential to the security and the future of the British people.

Early days.

Not a great deal is recorded of James Wolfe's years at Westerham. He probably only saw his father at intervals; the Lieutenant-Colonel would naturally have to spend much of his time away on duty, but in those intervals how the lad would absorb every parental reminiscence of service beyond the seas or across the border. The martial influence of the father, indelible as it was, was qualified and toned by the sweet and tender influence of the mother. If good mothers make good sons, Mrs. Wolfe must have been a veritable angel in the house. Father and mother, in their respective ways, are the shining lights of Wolfe's life as soldier and as man. Other influences which came to him at Westerham were his brother Edward, less than a year his junior, and his lifelong friend, George Warde, the youngest son of the owner of the neighbouring estate of Squerryes Court. James Wolfe possibly had something to do with Warde's choice of the profession of arms. In their hours together in the woods and fields of Squerryes, the

Wolfe and the Wardes played soldiers with all the earnestness of pretence.

For a while James and his brother went to a school kept by one Lawrence, of whom nothing is known beyond his name. James was eleven years of age when the home at Westerham was exchanged for one at Greenwich, and a more advanced tutor was found in the Rev. S. F. Swinden, whom James and Edward Wolfe held in affectionate memory after their schooldays. It was at Mr. Swinden's that Wolfe is said to have met a youngster destined like himself to leave his mark on British history. That was John Jervis, who was intended for the law, but ran away to sea, to become in time the great admiral Lord St. Vincent. As Wolfe in the days to come on the St. Lawrence was to entrust Jervis with a sacred commission, it is a pity this story of their school-days is not true. Wolfe had been five years in the Army when the Jervis family moved from Staffordshire to the banks of the Thames.<sup>1</sup>

Greenwich brought young Wolfe into touch with some of the forces that went to make up the larger national life. The river not only carried much of the commerce which was the very life-blood of the people, but bore to and fro the men who would be loudest in their clamour against the tyranny of the foreigner in his efforts to maintain a monopoly of over-the-sea markets. Walpole had preserved the peace for England during more than twenty years in circumstances

<sup>1</sup> Wright tells the story and Mr. Bradley and Mr. Doughty both repeat it. Wright's mistake on this point is amazing. He actually quotes Brenton's *Life of St. Vincent*, which contains the Admiral's own words that he was born 9th Jan., 1734 (O.S.), and at the age of twelve went to a school at Greenwich kept by a Mr. Swinden.

that demanded a very gymnast in diplomacy. He found kindred spirits in Cardinal Fleury in France and in Queen Caroline at home ; his motives were not always either unchallenged or unchallengeable ; his methods were not always compatible with dignity and honour, though their courage was superb. The people grew tired of a peace which gave no security, and George II, with an eye mainly to his Hanoverian interests, would have welcomed a pretext for the drawing of the sword which his Minister sedulously defeated. Whilst the King was concerned with the dynastic difficulties and ambitions of Europe, his people, seeking to enjoy the benefits of colonial and commercial enterprise, were incensed against Spain as later they were to be incensed against France, who now was England's ally. English merchants found the restrictions of the Treaty of Utrecht intolerable. One British ship per year of all the British mercantile marine was permitted to trade with Spanish America. It was a positive invitation to the descendants of Hawkins and Drake to turn themselves into smugglers. The Spaniards, with the letter of the law on their side, punished any luckless runner of illicit cargoes whom they might capture with truly Spanish severity. English national pride and commercial ambition combined with considerations of humanity to make idle all talk about words and forms even though they involved legality and international right.<sup>1</sup>

War with  
Spain.

Politicians with party and personal axes to grind strenuously encouraged the popular clamour, and when war was declared against Spain, on 13th October,

<sup>1</sup> Morley : *Walpole*, p. 216. Chap. x of Lord Morley's *Walpole* is a masterly summary, analysis and estimate of Walpole's foreign policy.

1739, the day was one not of national apprehension or regret, but of national rejoicing. Horace Walpole's suggestion that the people who were ringing their bells then would before long be wringing their hands was justified to the letter. To James Wolfe the war fever would be an exhilaration such as he had not known in his thirteen years of life. The martial spirit was part of his nature, and the call to arms set every nerve in the boy's body tense. Fleets sailed ; troops were under orders for service beyond the seas ; and every roll of the drum stirred the national consciousness to energetic action. The things of which his father had told him were now to happen again, and they came nearer home than ever when a big camp was formed a few miles away on Blackheath, and his father was appointed Adjutant-General of the force, 10,000 strong, collecting on the Isle of Wight for the Cartagena expedition.

The mere idea that any lad of James Wolfe's tender years, a lad moreover who was far from strong, should be allowed to take part in an expedition that must try the fortitude of the most robust strikes us to-day as ludicrous. What arguments James brought to bear on the father who surely did not want the responsibility, and the mother who used every appeal to heart and parental authority to keep the boy with her, we must evolve for ourselves. It was agreed that he should go with the expedition as a volunteer. His triumph here is not insignificant. It was admittedly a tribute to the energy and force of will that distinguished him through life ;<sup>1</sup> it was to supply the occasion of the first of that long and profoundly interesting series of letters which gave Wolfe a title to be regarded

A volunteer at thirteen.

<sup>1</sup> Bradley : *Wolfe*, p. 10.



as the literary soldier ; it was also to throw into sharp relief at the outset the physical conditions against which he battled stoically in nearly all he undertook.

Wolfe and  
duty.

Thus the boy, barely in his teens, was with his father at Newport prepared, in his own mind, to draw the sword manfully against the hated Spaniard. He was vastly impressed by the sight of the ships that went to make up his Majesty's "mighty navy," and he was not yet quite capable of detecting the defects in army organisation which the long peace had accentuated. The whole thing was more than a spectacle, because the lad had in him the intention, the genius of the soldier. In the midst of his excitements he remembered his "dearest mamma"; there were little twinges of conscience that he should not have heeded her protests; and he was much moved that she should doubt his love. He wrote a letter which was at least as far beyond his years as was his military ardour. He assured his mother that his love was "as sincere as ever any son's was to his mother," and begged her if she loved him not to give herself up to fears. "I will certainly write to you by every ship I meet because I know it is my duty. Besides, if it were not, I would do it out of love with pleasure." Here we have a note which a thoughtful man might have been pardoned for omitting, which many a man has omitted who had no intention to hurt. Duty done because it is duty and not reinforced by love must be a mechanical virtue; and Wolfe, boy as he was, saw that his mother's sense of injury might only be aggravated if he did not hasten to affirm an impulse stronger than duty. It was no ordinary mind of thirteen, no ordinary character that anticipated



the interpretation which might be put upon a conventional phrase.

Wolfe told his mother that he was in very good health and likely to continue so, but the statement was wanting in that nice accuracy too often sacrificed to optimism. He was taken ill before the Cartagena force could embark, and his father wisely at the eleventh hour decided that home was the lad's more fitting place. Wolfe could hardly have survived the disease, the distress, and the incompetent or inadequate medical accommodation which attended this ill-starred enterprise. There is a fine chance here for those who love to speculate on the might-have-beens. Would the history of the British Empire not have been radically different if Wolfe had found an early grave in Caribbean waters? Among those who took part in the Cartagena expedition and succumbed to its disorders, was a volunteer from Virginia—Washington's elder brother. His death changed the whole outlook for George Washington. "If," says Mr. Bradley, "George Washington had remained a younger son, it is most unlikely he would have been available in 1775 to have stepped into the chief command" of the revolting colonies. "And without George Washington the very struggle itself in which he triumphed seems an inconceivable thing."<sup>1</sup> If the death of a member of the Washington family in that expedition affected the history of America, the sparing of young Wolfe from a similar fate may equally be said to have contributed to the same end. It was the capture of Quebec by Wolfe which made the American revolt possible, and we may therefore take it that without Wolfe there would not have been the

A fortunate illness.

<sup>1</sup> Bradley: *Wolfe*, p. 12.

Washington we know. Laurence Washington died, and Wolfe was spared, to some purpose !

O.H.M.S.

Another year passed under Mr. Swinden's tutelage, and James Wolfe went to spend his Christmas holidays with his friend George Warde at Squerryes. The boys were amusing themselves at a spot in the grounds which is now historic, when Mr. Warde brought his young guest an envelope bearing the magic symbol, "On His Majesty's Service." The lad tore it open with none the less excitement because he probably anticipated the nature of its contents. His first commission ! It was dated November 3rd, 1741, and appointed him second lieutenant in his father's old regiment of marines. That was a memorable moment for Wolfe and for his country, and on the spot where he broke the seal of His Majesty's envelope his friends at Squerryes less than a couple of decades later erected a stone cenotaph bearing an inscription admirable in intent but not wholly devoid of imagination—

"Here first was Wolfe with martial ardour fired,  
Here first with glory's brightest flame inspired ;  
This spot so sacred will for ever claim  
A proud alliance with its hero's name."

Wolfe's martial ardour was not so much fired as confirmed by the receipt of his commission. He was now fifteen, a tall, spare, effeminate-looking youth, with red hair and features that were little indicative of the iron will behind them. If there be any truth to nature in the pictures of him which were painted after his death, he was not at any time the conventional hero in appearance. But there must have been something more attractive about him facially than the artists succeeded in discovering or rendering.

One historian dismisses Wolfe, no doubt after a due study of certain pictures, as a remarkably ugly boy with a shock of red hair and a turned-up nose;<sup>1</sup> another speaks of him as "the red-haired, unattractive soldier whose cold and almost repellent manner concealed some of the highest qualities."<sup>2</sup> It is agreed that Wolfe had a fine eye, "that searching, burning eye which carried all the distinction and greatness denied him elsewhere," says Sir Gilbert Parker.<sup>3</sup> Wolfe's face must have conveyed to those who knew him in the flesh a very different impression from that to be gleaned from most of his portraits. No character such as his could have failed to assert itself sooner or later in his physiognomy, and the love he won from so many people in different walks in life would not have gone to one who was unprepossessing. Some faces cannot be adequately interpreted by the brush any more than character is necessarily revealed by the camera. There is an infinite but not charming variety of so-called Wolfe portraits,<sup>4</sup> and none, even though it be authentic, seems to me to embody a character at once sweet and firm, sympathetic and resolute, serious with a qualifying vein of humour, eager to advance the right, quick to scorn the unworthy, resourceful, self-reliant, capable, and withal modest.

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue : *A History of the British Army*. vol. ii, p. 53.

■ McCarthy : *History of the Four Georges*, vol. ii, p. 375.

■ *The Seats of the Mighty*, chap. xxiii.

■ See an admirable article on the subject by Mr. Beckles Willson in the *Connoisseur*, January, 1909.

## CHAPTER II

### WOLFE IN FLANDERS

From  
Marine to  
Foot.

THE last thing in the world that Wolfe courted was the sea, and his enthusiasm on the receipt of his commission was qualified by the character of the arm to which he was appointed. He soon found a means of transfer and became an ensign of Colonel Duroure's Regiment of Foot, then known as the Twelfth. The regiment was under orders for Flanders, where England was again to take a hand in a continental conflict.

The Army  
in 1741.

Not international politics but the army was Wolfe's concern ; in all probability he knew little and cared less what the war was about. It sufficed that he was to take part in a real campaign and on ground of which he had heard his father—not yet returned from the West Indies—talk much. England's army in 1741 amounted to less than 20,000 men. That she had an army at all was almost matter for wonder. Every conceivable means was adopted to make the ranks unpopular not only with the men but with the people. There were no barracks, the soldiers were quartered in places which made them a nuisance, so that the populace might be sensible of the fetters a standing army would forge, and after a war regiments which had begun to understand their business were too frequently disbanded ; officers who were not retired on inadequate half-pay, generally elected to swell the more easily recruited army of men about town, aimless save in dissipation, efficient only in

unprofitable pursuits. The men were neglected whether they served at home or abroad, and in emergencies their numbers were augmented by the gaol-bird and the ne'er-do-weel. To prepare for war in time of peace was not the tenet of national safety in the early part of the eighteenth century, and the example set by Government was in the main faithfully followed by the officers who might at any time be called upon to direct the movements of men in the field. The Civil War, the struggle with France maintained by William III, the achievements of Marlborough confirmed the English people in their dislike of militarism and its cost in blood and treasure. Hence the army, with notable exceptions, was a poor machine badly looked after, and when we read its history and note its victories we can only conclude either that it enjoyed extraordinary good fortune or that the exceptions were of incomparably sterling stuff.

For England the whole of the eighteenth century was an intermittent duel with France for supremacy. It was a duel which began in Europe, was fought to a finish throughout the world, and ended only with Trafalgar and Waterloo. International relations at the time that Wolfe was called upon to play his small part in their settlement by the arbitrament of the sword, were what Seeley calls an "immense complex medley."<sup>1</sup> The royal houses of Austria, Prussia, France, Spain, Poland, Bavaria, and England were all concerned in an universal game of grab in which they changed their parts as circumstances dictated. Honesty was at a heavier discount than any mere Machiavel would ever have dared to encourage, and

Inter-  
national  
complica-  
tions.

<sup>1</sup> *The Expansion of England*, p. 28 (1886 ed.).

England and Austria alone came out of the dynastic *mêlée* with approximate credit. "Congresses without issue, campaigns without visible objective, open treaties, secret treaties, public alliances, private combinations, the destruction to-day of the web laboriously woven yesterday, the union of four powers against one, of three against two, and so on in every variety of permutation and combination make a vast chaos," which even Lord Morley<sup>1</sup> does not try to reduce to order. The really visible objectives were, on the one hand, the satisfaction of the greed and aggrandisement of princes, and, on the other, the preservation of ancestral and solemnly secured rights against that satisfaction. The Emperor Charles VI, in order to save dispute and bloodshed over the succession to his enormous heritage, negotiated with the various powers the Pragmatic Sanction. His daughter, Maria Theresa, was to ascend the throne not merely by right but by the guarantee of all Europe. Charles VI provided for every contingency save one—ambitious unreadiness to observe a sacred compact when observance meant the sacrifice of an opportunity for the advancement of self-interest.

George II  
and Maria  
Theresa

Of all the rulers who pledged their honour, one only, George II, was true to his bond. Frederick of Prussia—surnamed the Great on account of his marvellous achievements in war, rather than on account of qualities which should alone justify the title—promptly attempted to appropriate Silesia; France, Bavaria, Saxony, Spain, Poland, Sardinia all discovered claims and began to swarm about Austria like ravening wolves about the carcass of a lion. But they found the lioness in the person

<sup>1</sup> *Walpole*, p. 200.

of Maria Theresa prepared to dispute every inch of ground. Europe proclaimed the Elector of Bavaria Emperor, and as Charles VII he donned the Imperial mantle. Maria Theresa, strong in her own character, strong with the strength of a woman's weakness, appealed to her people to save for her son her father's dominions, and her people rallied round her to a man. They rose nobly to the occasion, the French who had invaded Austria were driven out, and the Austrians overran Bavaria. Frederick defeated the Austrians at Mollwitz, but Maria Theresa was undismayed, and the intervention of England in Flanders relieved the pressure of the French on her forces to the south. It was on behalf of Maria Theresa that some sixteen thousand English troops were to be despatched to the Continent.

Duroure's Regiment formed part of the flower of the English army assembled towards the end of April, 1742, on Blackheath to be reviewed by George II. The Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cumberland, and Field-Marshal the Earl of Stair were in attendance. The spectacle was more brilliant than any England had witnessed for a good long time. There was, of course, a crowd of spectators. A proud day that for Ensign Wolfe carrying the colours of his regiment. His mother and brother were present with other friends, and some hearts beat faster as the gaily uniformed stripling marched past. The regiment was to embark at Deptford for Ostend. It was a trying little voyage. In these days of more or less comfortable, rapidly moving steamers which cover the distance from the Thames to the Belgian coast in a few hours, there are sufficient terrors in contrary winds for passengers who are poor sailors. Wolfe's

**Wolfe in  
Belgium.**

boat was kept several days at sea before the sand dunes came in sight and Ostend could be made. That trip was certainly torture to Wolfe, but whatever his sufferings, whatever his sense of loss of dignity from sea-sickness, this son of Mars faced Father Neptune in all his moods with the same indomitable spirit he presented to every enemy. In Belgium, Duroure's men marched straight away to Bruges and Ghent. What the country hereabouts lacks in physical beauty it more than makes good in the romance of its history, of its alternating struggles for freedom and its commercial and manufacturing achievements. Wolfe's thoughts would be more of Marlborough and his father than of Charles the Bold, Maximilian or Charles V; more still of the protagonists in the present struggle, Frederick II and Louis XV and Maria Theresa, Prince Charles of Lorraine, Duc de Noailles, and the Earl of Stair who was in command of the British troops; but the appeal of the past is the animating force of the most commonplace present, and the present with which Wolfe was now directly interested was far from commonplace.

Nine  
months in  
Ghent.

The reception of Wolfe and his companions in Ghent where he was quartered, was anything but pleasing. There was no enthusiasm for the cause of Maria Theresa, and the people, hating to be dragged into a dispute from which, whoever else might gain, they would derive no sort of benefit, were often openly hostile to the British. English soldiers and the Ghentois came to blows on the smallest provocation, and the magistrates threatened with whipping, burning in the back and expulsion anyone who should affront the British. Wolfe, eager to get away to the front, had to possess his spirit in patience.



Ready to march at a couple of hours' notice, he was not called upon to move throughout that summer and winter. Nine months were spent in Ghent. Wolfe beguiled himself with professional studies, which the fortifications of the quaint old Belgian town assisted ; with the flute, on which he performed like another ardent soldier, Frederick the Great himself ; and with visits to the grand new play-house which had within recent years been started in the town. There were plenty of officers in the place, including his friend, George Warde, so that "we never want company," and he conversed "a little with the ladies who are very civil and talk French." He looked forward soon to seeing his brother Edward in Flanders, and "in all probability," he said, "before next year is over we may know something of our trade." Edward Wolfe apparently reached Ghent in the first weeks of 1743. He was lucky in being able to join his brother's regiment. His ambition was strictly fraternal. He wished to follow in James's footsteps, but his constitution was even more delicate than his brother's and the spirit was martial beyond the capabilities of the body.

In February a move was at last made from Ghent. On the way to Germany—"at St. Tron in the Bishopric of Liège"—Wolfe wrote home that they had had bad weather on the march, that his strength was not so great as he imagined—"I never come into quarters without aching hips and knees"—that the road ahead was trying and that he intended to hire a horse. He would march on foot one day and ride the next—sharing the horse probably with Edward. Nevertheless, he said, "I'm in the greatest spirits in the world." The language of the country was a difficulty.

Adjutant  
at sixteen.

Useful as French was, Edward said he would once have gone without his dinner if he had not been able to ask for it in Latin. On the 9th June the British-Hanoverian forces arrived at an awkward bend of the Main, near Aschaffenburg, and were joined by an Austrian force under the Duke d'Arenberg. There were repeated alarms that the Duc de Noailles, who was on the other side of the river with 60,000 men, was about to attack. Edward was actually in a skirmish and received his baptism of fire on the night of the 20th. James was called upon to face another ordeal. He was given the position of adjutant. How it happened that this boy of sixteen was entrusted with so important a post is not clear. On the 21st June he wrote from Aschaffenburg that King George had joined the army, and they would soon know what they were going to do. The situation was critical. The King found the forces under the Earl of Stair in something very like a trap, from which they could hope to escape only with heavy loss, if they escaped at all. They could not go forward; to stay where they were meant that their supplies were cut off and the French from across the river could make so many targets of them; in retreat lay the one slender chance and that only if it could be accomplished before the enemy were alive to the movement. The King ordered the retreat. Such was the desperate plight in which incompetence had involved the British and their allies at the time when Wolfe was to fight his first grim battle. And the duties of an adjutant, in any case severe, but more severe in these circumstances than usual, devolved on him.

Dettingen,  
27th June,  
1743.

Silently on the morning of the 27th June the allies began to retrace their steps in the direction of Hanau.

The movement was observed by de Noailles, who instantly sent a strong force across the river to cut them up or secure their surrender. Happily British commanders are not alone in their mistakes. The Duc de Grammont, who was entrusted with this vital manœuvre, instead of waiting for the retreating army at a defile, advanced to meet it on equal terms, and actually exposed his men to the fire of his own batteries across the river. The battle of Dettingen has been variously described. Military authority tells us that the honour which the generals had compromised was saved once again by "the fine old quality of British doggedness,"<sup>1</sup> and endorses the contemptuous description of George II—for which Thackeray seems mainly responsible<sup>2</sup>—standing in front of his troops "in the preposterous position of a fencing-master." George II has to bear the burden of many failings, but prejudice seems a little hard on his doings at Dettingen. His courage was never questioned, and at Dettingen he was only doing his best, and a fine best it was, to get the army out of the hole which others had made for it. James Wolfe's long letter to his father written from Höchst, on the 4th July, is so interesting from both the military and the personal point of view, written as it was by a boy, that I cannot refrain from quoting it at some length. After explaining that the fatigues of the day put him very much "out of order," Wolfe says—

"The army was drawn out this day se'nnight between a wood and the river Main, near a little village, called Dettingen, in five lines—two of foot and three of horse. The cannon on both sides began to play about nine o'clock in the morning, and we were exposed to the fires of theirs (said to be above

Wolfe's  
description.

<sup>1</sup> Col. C. B. Brackenbury : *Frederick the Great*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *The Four Georges*, Oxford Edition, p. 735.

fifty pieces) for near three hours, a great part of which flanked us terribly from the other side the water. The French were all the while drawn up in sight of us on this side. About twelve o'clock we marched towards them; they advanced likewise, and, as near as I can guess, the fight began about one. The *Gens d'Armes*, or *Mousquetaires Gris*, attacked the first line, composed of nine regiments of English foot, and four or five of Austrians, and some Hanoverians. They broke through the Scotch Fusileers, who they began the attack upon; but before they got to the second line, out of two hundred there were not forty living, so they wheeled, and came between the first and second line (except an officer with a standard, and four or five men, who broke through the second line and were taken by some of Hawley's regiment of Dragoons), and about twenty of them escaped to their army, riding through an interval that was made for our Horse to advance. These unhappy men were of the first families in France. Nothing, I believe, could be more rash than their undertaking."

Wolfe then briefly describes the second attack on the left by the Horse, and enlarges on the third and last attack by the Foot—

**Brisk  
fighting.**

"We advanced towards one another; our men in high spirits and very impatient for fighting, being elated with beating the French Horse, part of which advanced towards us; while the rest attacked our Horse, but were soon driven back by the great fire we gave them. The Major and I (for we had neither Colonel nor Lieutenant-Colonel), before they came near, were employed in begging and ordering the men not to fire at too great a distance, but to keep it till the enemy should come near us; but to little purpose. The whole fired when they thought they could reach them, which had like to have ruined us. We did very little execution with it. So soon as the French saw we presented they all fell down, and when we had fired they got up, and marched close to us in tolerable good order, and gave us a brisk fire, which put us into some disorder and made us give way a little, particularly ours and two or three more regiments, who were in the hottest of it. However, we soon rallied again, and attacked them with great fury, which gained us a complete victory, and forced the enemy to retire in great haste. 'Twas luck that we did give way a little, for our men were loading all the while, and it gave room for an Austrian regiment to move into an interval, rather too little before, who charged the enemy with

great bravery and resolution. So soon as the French retreated, the line halted, and we got the sad news of the death of as good and brave a man as any amongst us, General Clayton, who was killed by a musquet ball in the last attack. His death gave us all sorrow, so great was the opinion we had of him, and was the hindrance of anything further being done that day. He had, 'tis said, orders for pursuing the enemy, and if we had followed them, as was expected, it is the opinion of most people, that of 27,000 men they brought over the Main, they would not have repassed with half that number. A great number of their officers and men were taken prisoners. Their loss is computed to be between six and seven thousand men, and ours three thousand.

"His Majesty was in the midst of the fight ; and the Duke behaved as bravely as a man could do. He had a musquet-shot through the calf of his leg. I had several times the honour of speaking with him just as the battle began, and was often afraid of his being dash'd to pieces by the cannon-balls. He gave his orders with a great deal of calmness, and seemed quite unconcerned. The soldiers were in high delight to have him so near them. I sometimes thought I had lost poor Ned, when I saw arms, legs, and heads beat off close by him. He is called 'The Old Soldier,' and very deservedly. A horse I rid of the Colonel's, at the first attack was shot in one of his hinder legs, and threw me ; so I was obliged to do the duty of an adjutant all that and the next day on foot, in a pair of heavy boots. I lost with the horse, furniture and pistols which cost me ten ducats ; but three days after the battle, got the horse again, with the ball in him,—and he is now almost well again,—but without furniture and pistols."

Dettingen had its effect on the fortunes both of the war and of James Wolfe. The French, pressed elsewhere by Prince Charles, withdrew to their own frontier ; the allies, after their retreat to Hanau, made Worms their headquarters, and were neither molested nor in a mood to attempt to follow up their advantage. As for Wolfe, his services were recognized not only by his official appointment as adjutant but within a week or two by promotion to a lieutenancy. England rejoiced inordinately over the victory ; Handel composed his finest *Te Deum*, and George II was a

A marked  
man.

popular hero when he returned to London. The campaign of 1743 was over, and Wolfe went into winter quarters with his regiment at Ostend. He would have liked to take a trip home, but was refused permission, though it was granted to Edward. James was clearly a marked man. His presence with the troops was indispensable, and in the following June he was advanced a step further. He became captain in Barrell's Regiment, and curiously enough the promotion and transfer, whilst an official mark of his worth, kept him for the rest of his stay in Belgium from further participation in serious fighting. In the spring of 1744 Marshal Saxe, in command of the French, opened the campaign with a powerful army which scared the Dutch into surrendering Ypres, and was soon overrunning half Belgium. Wolfe, under General Wade's command, was on the banks of the Scheldt, where the allies awaited attack, but Prince Charles with 60,000 Austrians, crossed the Rhine and half the French forces were precipitately withdrawn to protect France itself from invasion.

The death  
of Edward.

October came, and Wolfe was again taking up winter quarters in Ghent, when a heavy sorrow came to him and to his family. His brother Edward, much loved and affectionately known as the Old Soldier—he was not seventeen,—was taken ill and died. James, near at hand but not understanding that the illness might terminate fatally, was not with him at the last, and the thought of the lad dying with no special friend, save his faithful servant, to watch over him, was a bitter one to his brother for many a day. James put his feelings into a letter to his mother, full of manly grief and of the philosophy which usually comes of a much more intimate experience of

the world. It hardly strikes one as characteristic of seventeen years of age. Were there ever two more precocious warriors than James and Edward Wolfe ? The letter is dated "Ghent, 29th October, 1744 O.S."—

"Poor Ned wanted nothing but the satisfaction of seeing his dearest friends to leave the world with the greatest tranquillity. He often called on us. It gives me many uneasy hours when I reflect on the possibility there was of my being with him some time before he died. God knows it was being too exact, and not apprehending the danger the poor fellow was in ; and even that would not have hindered it had I received the physician's first letter. I know you won't be able to read this paragraph without shedding tears, as I do writing it ; but there is a satisfaction even in giving way to grief now and then. 'Tis what we owe the memory of a dear friend.

"He was an honest and a good lad, had lived very well, and always discharged his duty with the cheerfulness becoming a good officer. He lived and died as a son of you two should, which, I think, is saying all I can. I have the melancholy satisfaction to find him regretted by his friends and acquaintances. His Colonel is particularly concerned for him, and desired I would assure you of it. There was in him the prospect (when ripened with experience) of good understanding and judgement, and an excellent soldier. You'll excuse my dwelling so long on this cruel subject, but in relating this to you, vanity and partiality are banished. A strong desire to do justice to his memory occasions it.

"There was no part of his life that makes him dearer to me than that where you have often mentioned—*he pined after me*. It often makes me angry that any hour of my life should pass without thinking of him ; and when I do think of him, that though all the reasons I have to lament his loss are now as forcible as at the moment of his departure, I don't find my heart swell with the same sorrow as it did at that time. Nature is ever too good in blotting out the violence of affliction. For all tempers (as mine is) too much given to mirth, it is often necessary to revive grief in one's memory."

James Wolfe was indeed too completely absorbed in his profession to admit of sorrow having more than a momentarily recurrent sway when the first

1745—the  
Stuart  
menace.



poignancy was over. He had already grasped the fact that British poverty in soldierly attainment was his opportunity ; preferment came to him, contrary to the usual practice, as the reward of merit, and he was prepared to take any post which might be denied to nepotism, wealth, or social influence. Whilst Wolfe in 1744-5 was busy in the cause of self-efficiency, France, against whom that efficiency was one day to be used with crushing effect, was employing every weapon at command to paralyse the arm of England. From the time when Louis XIV pledged his word to James II on his death-bed to assist his son to the British throne,—a pledge explained away on the very morrow when its consequences were realised—the French had always the Stuart card to play. In 1744 Louis XV encouraged Charles Edward to attempt the invasion of England. In 1745 the Pretender managed to do on the Scottish coast what he had failed to do on the English. It was a black year for England. The Duke of Cumberland had succeeded to the command of the allies in Flanders, had been badly beaten by Marshal Saxe at Fontenoy on 11th May, and had been unable to stay the advance of the victorious French at any point. Wolfe's old regiment (Duroure's) was among those that suffered most at Fontenoy ; his own, of which he was made brigade-major on June 12th, was not present ; he was at Lessines when Ghent was taken by the French ; and a couple of months later he and the rest of the British forces were recalled to England to deal with the Pretender.



## CHAPTER III

### FALKIRK, CULLODEN, AND LAFFELDT

WHEN Wolfe landed in England after an absence of three and a half years he found the country already in a state of rapidly growing alarm at the news from Scotland. Men had not forgotten the misery which the rising in '15 had occasioned on both sides of the Tweed, and the movements of the Young Pretender, as Charles Edward was called, soon showed the necessity for energetic measures. They were not forthcoming. The Government and the nation had been taken completely by surprise. They seem to have thought that the abortive effort of the previous year, when a French fleet intended for the invasion of England in Stuart as well as Bourbon interests, was stopped by Sir John Norris, and scattered by a storm, had disposed of the peril of invasion. As a fact Louis XV in 1745 did refuse to grant Charles Edward's request that a new expedition should be fitted out. The Prince, however, was determined to strike a blow on his father's behalf, and told King Louis that he would make the attempt even though he had to go with a solitary footman.

France and  
the Stuarts.

Towards the end of July he landed at Arisaig, in Moidart, at the south-west corner of Inverness-shire, with seven followers, "The Seven Men of Moidart." His presence in Scotland was not known to the Government for nearly three weeks. On the 19th August he raised his red and white-silk standard at Glenfinnan.<sup>1</sup> Supporters rallied round him apace ;

Charles  
Edward in  
Scotland.

<sup>1</sup> P. Hume Brown : *A Short History of Scotland*, p. 539.

the character of the adventure fired the Highland imagination, and Sir John Cope had only a small force at Edinburgh with which to challenge him. If the French had backed up Charles Edward in July, 1745, as they were prepared to back him in 1744 and contemplated doing three months later when he was as far south as Derby, England's chances of escape from a second Stuart restoration might have been slender. The French marshal, Belleisle, while a prisoner in England, said that he would "engage with 5,000 scullions of the French army to conquer England,"<sup>1</sup> and Henry Fox on the 5th September, 1745, wrote: "England, Wade says (and I believe), is for the first comer, and if you can tell whether the 6,000 Dutch and the ten battalions of English or 5,000 French or Spaniards will be here first, you know our fate."<sup>2</sup> Cope instead of trying to bar the Pretender's way south, and not feeling himself strong enough to proceed against him, adopted the extraordinary course of marching to Inverness. If he had been a traitor he could not have done more precisely what the rebels wished. He left the way to Edinburgh and England open. By the time Cope got back Prince Charles had proclaimed his father King James VIII in the Palace of Holyrood, and was ready to meet the English force not merely with vastly superior numbers, but with the sympathies, tacit or avowed, of the larger proportion of the Scottish people. At Prestonpans on the 21st September Cope's army was surprised as the dawn broke—it was Charles Edward's favourite method of attack—and in ten minutes it had ceased to exist. For a month the Prince unmolested held

Cope's  
extra-  
ordinary  
action.

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, July 26th, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> Coxe: *Memoirs of Lord Walpole*, p. 284.

royal Court at Holyrood ; it was precious time wasted from his point of view. Then he decided to try his fortunes in England.

Wolfe comes upon the scene about this time. He was with General Wade, who had ten thousand men at Newcastle. Wolfe's father, now Major-General, who was so far worn with his services, especially in the West Indies, that he was more fit for the fireside than the field, was there also. As usual, Wolfe was called upon to discharge duties beyond his official station. Judging from an order dated the 2nd November, 1745, that £930 was to be paid to him "for allowance of 93 baggage horses to the seven battalions lately come from Flanders," he was acting Deputy-Quarter-master-General. A letter to his mother, in which he seeks to remove her fears for his father's safety, is chiefly interesting for the hint it affords of the views held as to the rebel forces. She need not be concerned he wrote, "for 'tis the opinion of most men that these rebels won't stand against the King's troops." The annihilation of Cope's little force, mainly if not wholly composed of men who had never seen service, did not weigh seriously with the veterans of Dettingen and Fontenoy. They who had learned their "trade" in conflict with Noailles' and Saxe's trained and seasoned battalions would know how to dispose of a horde of wild Highlanders.

Wade heard that the Prince was near Carlisle. He tried to get across country to intercept him. Bad weather and boggy land baffled his efforts. He moved ten miles in fifteen hours. On the second day news came that Carlisle had surrendered, and Wade returned to Newcastle. The rebels continued their southern march light-heartedly. What a march that

With Wade  
at  
Newcastle.

The  
southern  
march.

must have been. They came within 120 miles of the capital. London wondered what was going to happen, and trembled. How one can picture the kilted and tartaned hillmen tramping with the Prince at their head, and breaking the monotony of the march with skirl of bagpipe and snatch of Highland song or some old Jacobite refrain such as—

“Then look for no peace  
For the war will never cease  
Till the King shall enjoy his own again.”

At Derby the Prince's officers seem suddenly to have lost their nerve; or they were disheartened by lack of serious demonstration in favour of the Stuarts. They decided that they must turn back. The Prince protested vigorously and the men rent the air with cries of indignation.<sup>1</sup> If they had suffered a check from superior forces there might be some reason for retreat, but to retreat without striking a blow was sheer humiliation. The Prince would have protested more stoutly still, possibly with more effect, if he had known that Louis XV, impressed by his progress, was assembling troops at Calais and Boulogne to assist him. But the protests of Prince and clansmen alike were vain: the officers insisted. Back they went, all the spirit gone out of the march, the Prince the most dejected member of his army; back again through the northern counties, pillaging and destroying with all the ruthless disregard which the Lowlander associated with the very name of Highlander. Whatever sympathy there may have been for the Stuart cause when the Pretender went south was dissipated by his followers on the return.

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh: *Story of the Nations: Scotland*, p. 268.

Back in Scotland, the Prince visited Glasgow, **Falkirk,** which was then already enjoying the prosperity that **17th Jan.,** came to it from the Act of Union ; he requisitioned **1746.** supplies of boots and clothes which his men sadly needed, and then made for Stirling. Wade was superseded in his command by Hawley—" Hangman" Hawley, as he was called. Hawley, who had moved up to Edinburgh, went to the relief of Stirling, and the armies met at Falkirk, where Hawley was nearly surprised. It was the morning of the 17th January ; a bleak sleet-laden wind blew full in the faces of the King's troops ; the men were half frozen, and the wet which found its way to their very skins found its way also to their ammunition. The conditions were all against the King's men, and Wolfe, frail in constitution, must have suffered keenly from the exposure. But there was little time to think of personal discomforts. Wolfe and his comrades were to undergo a new experience. Hawley began the fight by a cavalry charge ; the Highlanders reserved their fire and met the charge by a point-blank volley, which threw the horses and men who were not killed on the spot, into hopeless disorder. Remnants came back to scatter confusion in their own lines, and a few reformed to charge again. Whilst the pitiless sleet nearly blinded the waiting infantry, the Highlanders rushed upon them with a fury and a yell such as no soldier in the Continental wars had known. They bore down the first line and apparently were only checked by the men with whom Wolfe was fighting. To this day no one knows precisely what happened. Chaos reigned, and was not relieved till both armies took to their heels, or something very like it. The Highlanders bolted, and Hawley

abandoned his camp and his guns, falling back on Edinburgh.

**Various  
views.**

Wolfe makes light of the encounter; he said " 'twas not a battle as neither side would fight," and he anticipated that it would be "told in a much worse light than it really is"; he attributed the loss of the guns to the drivers who ran off with the horses—a version which is at variance with the accusation of misconduct brought against an officer who committed suicide rather than face court-martial. Anyway the result of the fight was sufficiently inconclusive to give the Jacobites, as one chronicler put it, "a handle to vaunt." Some students of the battle are strong in their censure of Charles Edward and his officers because they did not follow Hawley and destroy him as completely as they destroyed Cope, the truth probably being that they did not because they could not. Hawley attributed the reverse or whatever it was to the misleading accounts of the numbers and discipline of the enemy supplied by the Intelligence Department in Edinburgh: "You see and I feel the effect of it. I never saw troops fire in platoons more regularly, make their motions and evolutions quicker, or attack with more bravery or in better order than those Highlanders did at the battle of Falkirk. And these are the very men that you represented as a parcel of raw and undisciplined vagabonds. No Jacobite could have done more hurt to the King's faithful friends, or done more service to his inveterate enemies."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by A. C. Ewald ( *Life and Times of Prince Charles Edward Stuart*) from a pamphlet among the Scottish State papers.

History does not accord a high place among generals to the Duke of Cumberland, but we know that Wolfe held his abilities in considerable esteem—an esteem which would hardly have survived his later campaigns—and it is quite certain that new confidence was inspired in the British ranks when the Duke with reinforcements reached Edinburgh in hot haste to take over the command. Edinburgh received him with every possible demonstration of joy, and he proceeded to deal with the situation in a spirit which hitherto had been lacking. Falkirk convinced the sceptical and confirmed the pessimistic that the rising was no mere holiday adventure. The Prince after Falkirk resumed his attentions to Stirling, but with the coming of the Duke he retired to the north and took up his head-quarters at Inverness. The Duke endeavoured to follow him up, but with all the energy possible thrown into the pursuit, physical difficulties augmented by meteorological, could only be overcome by patience. It was decided to go into quarters at Aberdeen till the weather improved and to utilise the interval in preparing the King's forces for the decisive encounter, more particularly by exercises which might fit them the better to meet the peculiar tactics of the Highlanders. It was an interval which was not favourable to the Jacobites. Their provisions ran short, and there was much suffering and discontent.

Preparing  
for the  
decisive  
encounter.

In the second week of April the British were on the move across country. The Prince with a force variously estimated at eight or nine thousand, took up his position on Drummossie—or Culloden-moor, with Culloden House on his left; it was the 15th, the Duke's birthday, and the hungry Highlanders were

The  of  
Culloden.



informed that the event was being celebrated with feasting and revelry. Here was another opportunity for a surprise. A night march and an attack in the early morning before the effects of the day's indulgence had worn off might add Culloden to Charles Edward's victories, provide his men with food, and bring him one step nearer the British throne. Fortune did not favour him this time ; morning broke before his army got in touch with the British outposts, and there was nothing for it but retreat. Wolfe thought the failure was due to "some unforeseen accident, together with a great deal of superstition." A few hours later and the English, ten thousand strong, in three lines battle-arrayed, confronted the Stuart forces on the moor. Wolfe was on the left of the first line. Before the battle began the Duke addressed his men, reminding them of what depended on their success, bidding them forget Prestonpans and Falkirk, and warning them that no quarter would be given by the Highlanders—"a statement which, though quite justified by the traditional practice of the Highlanders, was," says Mr. Bradley, "untrue so far as this particular campaign had gone."<sup>1</sup> It is a question whether before Culloden orders were or were not issued by Lord George Murray, who was in command of the Prince's army, that no quarter was to be given to the Elector's troops "on any account whatever." Mr. Andrew Lang says Lord George's general orders, of which two copies are in possession of the Duke of Athole, do not contain the words.<sup>2</sup> That there was a belief in the genuineness of the "no-quarter"

The  
no-quarter  
question.

<sup>1</sup> *Wolfe*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Scotland*, vol. iv, p. 517.



orders is undoubted, and that belief illustrates the character of the fight. It meant that one army or the other was, for all practical purposes, to be annihilated.

The battle opened with an artillery duel, in which the English had much the best of it. Lord George Murray hoped that the Duke of Cumberland might hurl his men at the Highlanders after the manner of Hawley, but the Duke had quite other views. His guns played on the clansmen with precision, driving them to desperation and placing them beyond the control of their officers. When at last they could stand it no longer, the Macintoshes set the example by a rush upon the English front line of Foot, which, says Wolfe in a letter to his Uncle Walter, "they did with more fury than prudence, throwing down their firearms and advancing with drawn swords." By reserving their fire the English did deadly musketry work, but nothing could wholly withstand the mad onslaught. The Highlanders broke down the centre of the first English line, and of Wolfe's regiment 120 officers and men were killed and wounded. But Wolfe had the remnant well in hand, the second line stood firm and when Cumberland's cavalry began to move the Highlanders lost their nerve. They were cut down as they attempted to get away, and in a quarter of an hour from the time the battle began the fugitives who managed to escape the dragoons were all that was left of Charles Edward's army. That was the end of the Young Pretender and of the Jacobites so far as fighting went. The Prince after months of hiding and adventures which have added to the romance of his name, found himself safe once more on the Continent, and the Duke of Cumberland set

Culloden,  
16th April.  
1746.

Crushing  
the  
Clansmen.

about the task of crushing the Highlanders who had in any way supported the Stuart cause, by methods which secured for him the title of Butcher.

Wolfe was called upon to take his share in the unpleasant business. Never again were the clansmen to be in a position to challenge the right of the House of Hanover to the British crown. The story of course loses nothing from the fact that it is told chiefly by Stuart sympathisers. Before the action of Cumberland is condemned out of hand we must remember that this was not the first occasion on which the Highlanders had carried fire and slaughter into innocent homes in the interest of the Stuarts, and a Scotch historian has reminded us that the barbarities of Cumberland's army were no worse than those of most other armies in similar circumstances. It is not quite reasonable to judge it by modern standards. Nor were the English soldiers the sole offenders. The clansmen in the Duke's army were at least as brutal in their treatment of the vanquished.<sup>1</sup> However uncongenial compliance might be, Wolfe would certainly not have been backward in enforcing the orders of his chief. A certain story told of him and the Duke is probably entitled to no sort of credence. Wolfe, it is said, was with the commander-in-chief after the battle when they came across a wounded Highlander, whose glance of hatred the Duke resented. "Wolfe," said his Royal Highness, "shoot me that Highland scoundrel who dares to show us such insolence." "My commission," said Wolfe, "is at your royal highness's disposal, but I never can consent to become an executioner." The story, it

<sup>1</sup> Macrae: *Scotland Since the Union*, p. 73.

strikes one, is told not to illustrate the humanity of Wolfe so much as the brutality of the Duke.

Culloden was one of the battles that have decided the fate of countries. Wolfe played his part with a soldierly distinction which ever after ensured for him the favour of his chief. It was near the end of July when the Duke left Scotland to receive an ovation in London and a pension of £25,000 a year. What Wolfe did throughout that summer can only be surmised from such incidental allusion as is to be found in local guide-books and Scott's introduction to *Rob Roy*. He is said to have commanded the Fort of Inversnaid in the gorge not far from Loch Lomond. "When we find the celebrated General Wolfe commanding in it," says Sir Walter, "the imagination is strongly affected by the variety of time and events which the circumstance brings simultaneously to the recollection." Wright is, however, of opinion that as the fort was in ruins in 1746, there must be some confusion with Wolfe's later doings in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter states that the fort was "a third time repaired after the extinction of civil discord," and that would probably be a year or two later. We must therefore take up the thread of Wolfe's career after he left Scotland in the winter of 1746 under orders again for Flanders. For the first time for more than four years he was to have a short holiday which he spent with his father and mother in London. They had shifted their home to Old Burlington Street. How delightful would be a glimpse of this young veteran with his parents; the wonder of friends who hardly knew whether to treat him as boy or man. He disposed of his fortnight or so between

An interval  
and fresh  
orders.

■ *Life of Wolfe*, p. 92.

the domestic hearth and the attractions and distractions of London, the London of Johnson and Hogarth, of Garrick and Fielding. And then he was off once more to join the Austrians and the Dutch in their efforts to withstand the redoubtable Saxe. France had not failed to take full advantage of the diversion caused by the troubles of England. Flanders was practically in possession of her troops. Her objective now was Maestricht. The English threw themselves into the new campaign with all the greater zeal in the hope of punishing Louis XV for his support of the Stuart cause. The Duke of Cumberland resumed command of the Austro-Dutch-British forces, now 120,000 strong. There was some delay in taking the field, thanks to the inadequate commissariat arrangements made by the Dutch and Austrian commanders.

Two rare  
letters.

Wolfe's letters at this time, judging from the rare specimens that have survived, were a delightful blend of youthful gossip and soldierly appreciation of the situation. In one, written on the 1st June, 1747, to Miss Lacey,<sup>1</sup> the tone of which shows her to have been a very special friend and confidante, if not something closer, he talked of certain "dear girls" and the injustice of any doubts as to their constancy. But his thoughts were not only for the "dear girls." "We are here," he said, "the guardians of the Republick and since their reformation I begin to think them worth our care." In another letter dated "the camp at Westerloo, June 22nd," he referred to Maestricht, which the Duke was presently to make

<sup>1</sup> Miss Lacey according to an endorsement on this letter became Mrs. Pool; she was probably a relative of the famous General Lacey in the Russian service.

a supreme effort to save. "The implacable enemy," he said, "may depend on their former success and use it as a motive to new enterprises." In that case Miss Lacey might be assured that nothing a fine army could undertake would be wanting. Something that she had told him or failed to tell him was responsible for the first reference we get to his relation with the fair sex. "You have," he wrote, "left me in a doubt that is hurtful to my repose. Sure it must never happen that a soldier is unhappy in his love," and he was apprehensive lest some unworthy person should triumph in "the frailty of my countrywomen." He sent his wishes for the health and happiness of Miss Lacey's "pretty friends" and confessed: "I may say to my praise that no man has a greater consideration for the sex than your obedient humble servant, J. W."

Wolfe, who liked to "catch himself disposed to serious thoughts," was soon to discover that the French did presume on their previous success. The Duke encountered Saxe at Laffeldt on the 2nd July. That day's battle was intended to dispose once and for all of Maria Theresa's claims and to confirm the French in their mastery of the Netherlands. Saxe had an army of 150,000 men, and Louis had actually come to witness the triumph. If the Dutch had fought with the same spirit and stood their ground or rallied when forced to give way, with the same dogged determination that the English showed throughout the day, the French might have been badly beaten; at the moment when the fortunes of the day seemed to be in favour of the allies the Dutch threw everything into confusion by retreating and the Duke of Cumberland was only saved from

Laffeldt,  
2nd July,  
1747.

capture by a furious cavalry charge led by Sir John Ligonier, who was himself taken prisoner. The charge saved the situation. The allies were able to retire on Maestricht, and the French, who had lost ten thousand men, abandoned all idea for the present of another attempt to take it. The battle of Laffeldt cost the allies 5,000 men in killed and wounded, the British casualties being disproportionately severe, for there was some truth in Louis XV's remark that "The English not only paid all but fought all." Wolfe's regiment was in the thick of the fight, and Wolfe was wounded, though happily not seriously; his services were sufficiently conspicuous to command the Duke's public thanks. The ensuing winter Wolfe was permitted to spend at home. Hence, the twenty-first anniversary of his birth was celebrated in Old Burlington Street. No conventional majority function that! At an age when youth usually begins to think of settling down to the serious business of life, he had already put in six years in the hard school of professional experience.

Peace and  
profes-  
sional  
prospects.

Returning to Holland in March, 1748, Brigade-Major Wolfe was sent to join a detachment of British troops with the Austrians near Breda—a post which did not appeal to him. Negotiations with a view to peace had been opened at Aix-la-Chapelle, but the fighting went on. Maestricht was besieged by Saxe, and Wolfe had some hope of assisting "a fortunate stroke" which might prove the total ruin of the besieging army. In a letter from Osterhout dated the 12th April he gave the purport of a conversation with Adjutant-General Yorke, who said some "civil things." The Duke, according to the Adjutant-General, had expressed great concern at not having it

in his power yet to serve Wolfe, but intimated his "just intention" to give him a major's commission without payment so soon as opportunity served. Wolfe, professing himself to be beyond the reach of disappointment, did not expect much to come of this. The negotiations for peace were so far advanced that the preliminaries were signed and orders for the cessation of fighting were issued, and Wolfe in the intervals of affairs was speculating as to his future. Much as he had done, efficient as he had made himself according to the standard of his fellows, he was aware that in general education he was lamentably wanting, and that in regard to military science, with all his experience and application, he had mastered but its fringe. Without funds—and £10,000 he said might be "prettily disposed of"—something more than patient merit was necessary to preferment in the days of purchase, of "family compacts" in small things as in large, of social and political wire-pulling which there was little attempt even to gloss, certainly not disguise. His parents did all they could for him financially, and his mother always had her eye open with a view to a rich marriage that should place her son beyond the necessity of schemes of economy in which, as he humorously put it, spare diet and small beer had their place. Wolfe's ideas of economy were not those of the young men of the time. He did not waste his substance in riotous living, fine clothes, and high play, and then appeal to the paternal purse on the ground that the society in which he mixed made economy impossible. But "an unlucky knowledge of the immediate necessity of living well"—in other words, his health—made the practice of "parsimonious maxims" unwise. If, said Wolfe, the

Looking  
to the  
future



paymaster-general "knew how well we feed, and that sometimes the table for four is crowded, he would be jealous of our emoluments and censure our extravagance, refuse perhaps our arrears, and cut off the non-effectives."

Desire to  
travel.

However, to feed the brain rather than the body was Wolfe's immediate concern. He ardently desired to travel and to study the military systems of other nations, of Prussia, of Austria, and of Italy, but the opportunity was denied him. He expressed his feelings in strong terms against the "settled opinion" that an officer should confine himself to his particular military functions. Why should men's capacities be beaten down so that "no man would ever be fitted for a higher employment than he is in? 'Tis unaccountable that who wishes to see a good army can oppose men's enlarging their notions or acquiring that knowledge with a little absence which they can't possibly meet with at home, especially when they are supposed masters of their present employment and really acquainted with it. In all other stations in life that method is usually pursued which best conduces to the knowledge every one naturally wishes to have of his own profession." Another letter written by Wolfe when he was in camp at Osterhout bears on this plaint. He did not believe in limiting the ideas of men to their professional pursuits, still less to the narrow grooves which sufficed to carry them through from point to point. "We military men don't accustom ourselves to moral topics, or seldom entertain one another with subjects which are out of the common rôle from the frequent occasion we have to mention our own affairs which in time of war are of no small extent and concern. Possibly our manner



of writing may proceed in some measure from diffidence and modesty as not caring to attempt things we are sensible have been better touched upon ; and rather choose to be confined to that particular branch of knowledge with which we are supposed to be well acquainted.”<sup>1</sup>

A new influence entirely outside his profession had entered Wolfe's life. During his visit to London in the winter of 1747-8 he very nearly surrendered to the charms of one of Sir Wilfrid Lawson's daughters, a maid of honour to the Princess of Wales. The capitulation was complete when he returned from the Netherlands for good in December, 1748. Wolfe might have a tender corner in his heart for Miss Lacey and her “pretty friends,” but the deeper and more abiding passion came to him only when he met Miss Lawson. She had an auxiliary merit in the shape of a little fortune of some £12,000—in Wolfe's eyes probably a sufficient reinforcement of love's claims, but not in his mother's. She found a lady worth £30,000 a year, whom she regarded as much more fitted to be her son's wife. But in that as in other matters the ever-dutiful boy had views of his own, and with every desire in the world to “oblige,” he was constrained to obduracy. “Sure it must never happen that a soldier can be unhappy in his love” : his desire to marry Miss Lawson was the occasion of much unhappiness to the author of that oracular line.

<sup>1</sup> Beckles Willson : “Some Unpublished Letters of General Wolfe,” *Nineteenth Century*, Sept., 1908.

## CHAPTER IV

### WOLFE, THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE, AND SOME REFLECTIONS

Major of  
the 20th.

WITH the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle from which, after seven or eight years' war, nobody derived an atom of benefit, the restoration of peace apart, England once more found herself governed by men of timorous Imperial outlook. That treaty made England feel that all her sacrifices had been in vain. In America the surrender of Louisbourg, which the colonists themselves had captured, to France in return for Madras was strongly resented. Pelham, the Prime Minister, was a petty Walpole. He was convinced that England could not stand alone against the House of Bourbon, and the mere thought that the French might join hands with the Dutch scared him. Under such auspices, Wolfe could not hope that the army would provide much opportunity for others than coxcombs and uniformed swaggerers. The exceptions certainly proved the rule. Yet his military ardour burned fiercely : he wanted to know all that was best in other systems and was determined to secure by force of character what came to others by favouritism. The nepotism of the age was not altogether without leaven. Wolfe had not been in London many days before he was gazetted Major of the 20th—his rank abroad had been brevet only—and he repaired in January, 1749, to Stirling, where the regiment was quartered. His colonel was Lord George Sackville ; his lieutenant-colonel the Hon.

Edward Cornwallis. The prospect of Wolfe's succeeding to the position of lieutenant-colonel at an early date was a good one, always provided ulterior considerations were not allowed to override professional. Cornwallis was appointed Governor of Nova Scotia, and from the time of Major Wolfe's arrival in Stirling he was acting lieutenant-colonel, then as always discharging duties beyond his rank.

In Scotland in 1749 Wolfe took up afresh the task of assisting to reduce the Highlanders to complete submission and control. Even two years had made some impression. After Culloden, Scotland entered on a new era: an era which meant not merely the destruction of Jacobite power for harm but the disappearance of many distinctive racial symbols. Tartan and kilt had to be abandoned, and the Highland feudal system, which made the chieftain a law unto himself and his followers, had to go. The state of Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century was very different from what it became during the second half. The Highlanders were as wild and lawless a lot as the hillmen of the Indian north-west frontier to-day, and some of Scott's facts in his prefaces and notes convey an idea totally at variance with the impression left by the romance which he built up from them. The Rob Roy of the introduction to the novel which bears his name was not entirely the Rob Roy of the story. Efforts at civilisation tried after '15 had so far failed that more strenuous measures were instituted after '45. Of these measures the most important was the substitution of sheriffs appointed by the Crown for the hereditary jurisdiction of the chieftains, who were no longer to hold lands on condition of "wardship" or

Scottish  
changes

military service. To compensate those heads of clans who had taken no part in the rebellion for losses involved in their change of status, Parliament voted £150,000, and as invariably happens in such cases the money was allotted in a way that made dissatisfaction inevitable. But Scotland did not nurse her grievances. Wealth came from the industrial activity encouraged by the breaking down of the border barriers and the opening up of the country by roads which Wade had started after '15 and Wolfe and others were now to continue. Scotland placed herself as a matter of right on a footing of equality with her powerful neighbour and entered boldly into rivalry for whatever prizes or rewards the British Empire had to offer.<sup>1</sup> How well she succeeded the story of the British Empire east and west amply proclaims.

Glasgow in  
1749.

Wolfe's first care in Stirling was for his men. He instructed his captains to keep a sharp personal eye on them, not to be content with sergeant's reports, but to visit the men's quarters at unaccustomed times and when any man seemed ill or out of condition to ascertain the cause in order to find a remedy. A couple of months after his arrival Wolfe's regiment was transferred to Glasgow. Here as elsewhere in Scotland he was seldom in quite congenial surroundings. At times he felt himself rather more out of the world of that civilisation of which London was the centre than many an officer to-day who is serving on the confines of the Empire. Glasgow in 1749 was not an ideal jumping-off place for ambitious youth keen for military preferment. He did not like Scotland, and talked of "the very bloom of life being nipped

<sup>1</sup> Macrae, p. 82.

in this northern climate." His health in Glasgow was especially bad ; he felt the reaction after his several campaigns, and the slightest business was a trial. He chafed under his inability to prosecute his suit with Miss Lawson, and feared that parental opposition and long absence would extinguish the fire of his passion. Young flames, he said, must be constantly fed or " they'll evaporate." He was short of means and estimated that after providing for necessaries he had 1s. 1d. per day for pocket-money—a condition of things which his father amended directly he heard of it. He did not care for the men with whom he worked in Glasgow—they were new to him and many of them were of " low mettle," and if there was any prospect of an everlasting stay " I'd rather be a major upon half-pay, by my soul ! " Young as he was, he knew that one in his position of authority would be surrounded by either " flatterers or spies." " The men here are civil, designing, and treacherous with their immediate interest always in view. They pursue trade with warmth and a necessary mercantile spirit arising from the baseness of their other qualifications. The women, coarse, cold and cunning for ever enquiring after men's circumstances : they make that the standard of their good breeding." The northern *nouveaux riches* were as little to his taste as the rich incompetents who secured the professional plums.

But grumble as he might, Wolfe, according to his lights—and they were not mere spluttering wicks—struggled to make the best of his situation. A professor at the college to whom he had a letter of recommendation, introduced him to a social evening when conversation turned on subjects with which

Solace in  
books and  
friendship.

Wolfe was unfamiliar. "He was so much mortified at not being able to bear any share in it that he next morning entreated his friend the professor to put him in the way of acquiring the knowledge he found himself deficient in. He was gratified in this request and he became a most diligent student while he continued in Glasgow."<sup>1</sup> A tutor taught him mathematics and assisted him to recover his "almost lost Latin." He found solace in his books and his correspondence. Writing to his friend, Captain William Rickson, then in Dublin, he said: "You'll believe me when I tell you that, in my esteem, few of what we call advantages in life would be worth accepting if none were to partake them with us. What a wretch is he who lives for himself alone—his only aim! It is the first degree of happiness here below that the honest, the brave, and the estimable part of mankind, or at least some among them, share our success." But of course his real diversion was his profession, as to which he indulged in certain philosophic reflections in a letter to his father—

**Advantages  
of military  
life.**

"That variety incident to a military life gives our profession some advantages over those of a more even and constant nature. We have all our passions and affections roused and exercised, many of which must have wanted their proper employment had not suitable occasions obliged us to exert them. Few men are acquainted with the degrees of their own courage till dangers prove them, and are seldom justly informed how far the love of honour or dread of shame are superior to the love of life. This is a knowledge to be best acquired in an army; our actions are there in presence of the world, to be freely censured or approved. Constancy of temper, patience, and all the virtues necessary to make us suffer with a good grace, are likewise parts of our character, and, as you know, frequently called in to carry us through unusual difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxi, p. 507.

"What moderation and humility must he be possessed of that bears the good fortune of a successful war with tolerable modesty and humility, and he is very excellent in his nature who triumphs without insolence. A battle gained is, I believe, the highest joy mankind is capable of receiving, to him who commands; and his merit must be equal to his success if it works no change to his disadvantage. Lastly, a defeat is a trial of human resolution, and to labour under the mortification of being surpassed, and live to see the fatal consequences that may follow to one's country, is a situation next to damnable."

Wolfe's responsibilities were increased by the transfer of his colonel, Lord George Sackville, to Dublin. The "difficult and troublesome employment of a commander"—still higher duties without the rank—devolved upon him, and he had a lively consciousness that to keep the passions in bounds "when authority and immaturity go together," to do justice to good and bad, "reward and punish with unbiassed hand," "reconcile the severity of discipline with the dictates of humanity," study tempers and dispositions, and "oblige without partiality," "discouraging vice and recommending the reverse at the turbulent age of twenty-three" was no mean call on one whose natural propensity might be opposed to the very courses he upheld. No man, certainly none at the mature age of twenty-three, was ever more assured of the superior advantages in leadership of practice over precept. One of Wolfe's years would find it hard to preach and to practice without becoming somewhat of a prig, at least in the eyes of his fellows, but the ample knowledge of his character which his letters supply puts any such deduction on one side. Wolfe's great idea was to prove himself worthy of whatever confidence was reposed in him and to make the principles and the integrity which

Authority  
and im-  
maturity.



always marked his father's life the rule of his own. In a letter to his mother from Glasgow on 2nd October, 1749, he said—

“ Few of my companions surpass me in common knowledge but most of them in vice. This is a truth I should blush to relate to one that had not all my confidence, lest it be thought to proceed either from insolence or vanity ; but I think you don't understand it so. I dread their habits and behaviour, and am forced to an eternal watch upon myself that I may avoid the very manner which I most condemn in them. Young men should have some object constantly in their aim, some shining character to direct them. 'Tis a disadvantage to be first at an imperfect age ; either we become enamoured with ourselves, seeing nothing superior, or fall into the degree of our associates.”

Appointed  
Lieutenant-  
Colonel.

Lord Bury succeeded to the colonelcy, but as months elapsed before he visited the regiment, its interests were entirely in Wolfe's charge. In March, 1750, his hopes were gratified by his appointment as lieutenant-colonel. His promotion quickened his desire to go abroad in order not to sacrifice all his time “ in idleness or trifling soldiership.” His friend Rickson was with Cornwallis in Nova Scotia, and Wolfe outlined to him a tour which he would make to Metz, along the Rhine to Switzerland, and back through France and the Netherlands. His interest in Rickson's situation in Nova Scotia was keen. The colony, hitherto known as Acadie, belonged to France down to the Treaty of Utrecht, and Cornwallis was now busy making it British in fact as well as in name. Wolfe asked many questions about the place, the people, and the government, and spoke enthusiastically of the “ felicity of our American colonies ” compared with those of France and Spain. What would Wolfe not have given to be with Rickson almost within hail of the spot which a few years hence



was to be the scene of his immortality? But Wolfe was not even to be allowed to go abroad. Leave of absence was granted, but it was intimated that he must stay in England. One must share his perplexity and inability to understand why.

If Wolfe had been allowed to take a run abroad he would have been spared an experience which was a cause of regret to him for months. What he resisted successfully in Scotland he succumbed to in London, where he arrived on 14th November, 1750, to stay with his parents in Old Burlington Street. His lapse into the depravity of the age, when it was "the vogue of the best society"<sup>1</sup> to drink, gamble, swear, and scoff at religion and morality, may have been due to reaction after the severity of his self-discipline in the north; it may have been due to disgust that he was not permitted to turn his holiday to account profitably abroad as he believed he could; it may have been due to the veto of his parents on his "senseless passion" for Miss Lawson, who, moreover, seems to have endorsed their views by rejecting his advances; or it may have been the cumulative effect of all three. Whatever the explanation he plunged recklessly into the coarse pleasures of London life, to the intense pain of his father and mother and his own physical undoing. He made himself ill, and had barely recovered when he rejoined his regiment at Banff in the middle of April, 1751. During his four months in London, he told Rickson he committed more imprudent acts than in all his life before, living an idle, dissolute, abandoned life, "and that not out of vice, which is the most extraordinary part of it. I have escaped

A period  
of folly.

<sup>1</sup> Wright, p. 161.

at length and am once again master of my reason, and hereafter it shall rule my conduct." His letters to his father were charged with manly apologies: his father had evidently upbraided him sharply. He talked of those "seeds of such imperfections in me that perhaps only wanted nourishment and proper occasion to break forth," and he begged his father not to think it troublesome to him to read any paternal letter though it should be the mirror of his follies.

Nova  
Scotia.

On his return to Banff, Wolfe still showed a lively interest in Nova Scotian affairs—an interest that has a certain piquancy in view of events of which Wolfe perhaps never dreamed in his flightiest moment of ambition. He wrote to Rickson that he imagined certain works would be undertaken "in expectation of future wars with France when I foresee great attempts to be made in your neighbourhood." Did he foresee that the fortress of Louisbourg, which had been taken by the New England levies from the French in 1744, would have to be taken again before the position of the British colonies would be tolerable? He found "the present schemes of economy" favoured by the ministry destructive of all patriotic enterprise, and was disgusted with Pelham and his colleagues that they refused to strengthen the garrison of Nova Scotia. But Pelham was afraid of taking any step which might afford a new occasion of quarrel with "our everlasting and irreconcilable adversary"—"a bad prognostic," as Wolfe put it. The Acadians made things so impossible for the British that it was later deemed necessary forcibly to transplant them to other colonies. It was a harsh proceeding, but not quite so barbarous as the poet's pathetic frenzy would have us believe.

Wolfe was sorry for the position in which Rickson found himself, with no hope of ending the hostility of the French by a decisive blow and in constant danger from assassination. "These circumstances discourage the bravest minds. Brave men when they see the least room for conquest, think it easy and generally make it so ; but they grow impatient with perpetual disadvantages." Could the nerveless statesmanship of the period from which Pitt a very few years hence with the aid of a few indomitable spirits like James Wolfe and Robert Clive, of Boscawen and Hawke and Saunders, was to rescue the country as if by magic, be illustrated more simply ? Wolfe would have made short work of some of the troubles of the British in Nova Scotia and by an almost dramatic stroke—"prognostic" here at any rate—he suggested that the Highlanders, so recently at war with England, so soon to add new laurels to British arms, would be the people for the unpleasant work. "I should imagine that two or three independent Highland companies might be of use ; they are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to a rough country, and no great mischief if they fall. How can you better employ a secret enemy than by making his end conducive to the common good ? If this sentiment should take wind, what an execrable and bloody being should I be considered here in the midst of Popery and Jacobitism."

Wolfe's sentiments concerning his friend's position in Nova Scotia and his own in Scotland if analysed would have been found to be curiously similar. Though he made some good friends in Scotland, he always looked upon himself "as an exile : with respect to the inhabitants I am so, for I dislike 'em

Inverness  
in 1751.

Distance of  
Inverness

much." So, when in Banff, he told Rickson ; so when, in the autumn of 1751, he was transferred to Inverness, the very head centre of Jacobitism, he told his father : " A little while serves to discover the villainous nature of the inhabitants and brutality of the people of its neighbourhood. Those, too, who pretend the greatest attachment to the Government, and who every day feed upon the public purse, seem to distinguish themselves for greater rudeness than the open and professed Jacobites." Inverness in those days was not the sort of place to make less querulous a temperament so impatient for larger things, which " fretted at trifles and quarrelled with toothpicks." Wolfe for a time liked nothing in Inverness, and he had " the additional mortification " that the country round about afforded no relief in the shape of hunting and shooting. He wondered how long such a place would take to wear out the love of arms " in a man moderately inclined that way." He derived some satisfaction in surveying the field of Culloden " with great exactness," and reporting to his father that he found room for " military criticism as well as for a little ridicule upon some famous transactions of that memorable day. The actors shone in the world too high and bright to be eclipsed ; but it is plain they don't borrow much of their glory from their performance on that occasion, however they may have distinguished themselves in later events." He did not reflect on the Head but on the lower agents. His censure, he said, was made not to exercise his ill-nature but to " exercise the faculty of judging," to learn from the false steps of others what to avoid and from " the examples worthiest of imitation " what should never be lost sight of. With

many of the families against whose fathers and sons he had fought he was necessarily brought in contact. "We have an assembly of female rebels every fortnight, entirely composed of Macdonalds, Frazers, and M'Intoshes." He danced with the daughter of a famous chieftain who fell at Culloden. These "female rebels" were "perfectly wild as the hills that breed them, but they lay aside their principles for the sake of sound and movement."

In a flash of sardonic humour Wolfe assured his mother that "an easy stupidity and insensibility seems to have crept into me and does the part of reason in keeping the vessel steady with prodigious success. It is so pleasing a state that I prefer it to any conceit that the fancy can produce, any whirlwind of the brain or violent chase after nothing." He had reached the end of his twenty-fifth year, and in a letter home indulged in some reflections on the wearing away of life. Written in the dead of night, the note was pessimistic. "It matters little where a man passes his days and what station he fills, or whether he be great or considerable, but it imports him something to look to his manner of life. This day I am five and twenty years of age, and all that time is as nothing. When I am fifty (if it so happens) and look back it will be the same; and so on to the last hour." Life's uncertainty induced the feeling that "the little time taken in for meditation is the best employed." All seemed vanity. Yet serious as his thoughts and good intentions may be on retiring to bed, so strangely "mixed and compounded" is human nature that "it is likely I may rise with my old nature or perhaps with the addition of some new impertinence and be the same wandering lump of idle

Serious  
thoughts at  
twenty-five.

errors that I have ever been." "Our natural weakness" made him fearful of being drawn by the herd into "the worst degree of our iniquities." Work was salvation: "Most employment and least vice." He tried to be patient under "the little inconveniences" to which he was subject, and held in contempt those who could only be happy in luxury and idleness. "There are young men amongst us that have great revenues and high military stations, that repine at three months' service with their regiments if they go fifty miles from home. Soup and venaison and turtle are their supreme delight and joy—an effeminate race of coxcombs, the future leaders of our armies, defenders and protectors of our great and free nation!" He did not strive to avoid the vices affected by most army officers of the period merely because he feared contamination. Nor did he seek from mere impatience alone to get into touch with the world outside his shifting but hardly varying Scottish society. He had a fear that "the tyrannical principles of an absolute commander" "the temptations of power" might make him "proud, insolent, and intolerable." "By frequenting men above myself I may know my true condition and by discoursing with the other sex may learn some civility and mildness of carriage, but never pay the price of the last improvement with the loss of reason. Better be a savage of some use than a gentle amorous puppy obnoxious to all the world. One of the wildest of wild clans is a worthier being than a mere philander."

The effect.  
of study

"Mere philander" Wolfe could never be. He kept his studies going and read mathematics until he had "grown perfectly stupid," he said, "and algebraically worked away the little portion of

understanding that was allowed to me. They have not even left me the qualities of a coxcomb ; for I can neither laugh nor sing, nor talk for an hour upon nothing." This was "a sensible loss," but he consoled himself with the reflection that "a man may make a neighbourlike appearance in this cold region with a moderate competency of knowledge, and with a degree of gravity that may supply the deficiency. And whoever goes to kirk (as I do) once a week, and there comforts himself with more reverence to the priest than consideration for the nature of the business—herein I sometimes fail—will most assuredly obtain the reputation of great wisdom and discretion." A cynical vein is touched by the allowance that he and his companions are "the most religious foot officers" seen in the north for many a day, whereas in other quarters they had been regarded as no better than the sons of darkness.

Wolfe's little disquisitions on morals are a fine tribute to the abiding influence of parental example. Nor were they a verbal cloak for inconsistency of conduct. He was no saint ; he could even be a rebel at times, but he always longed to be able to show the superiority of action over words. "A number of words and sentences ever so well put together cannot equal a good action," he wrote from Glasgow in July, 1749 ; "it is evident that our words are not proof of good conduct," he wrote from Inverness in February, 1752, "they don't always express our thoughts, but what a man does may be depended upon and is the true measure of his worth." With his trouble over his love affair, his resentment and ultimate surrender, and his standard of the relative value of words and action, in mind, many things may

The  
measure  
of worth.



be read into another passage from this letter of February, 1752. His parents could not have mistaken its fairly plain significance: "We are not enough acquainted with ourselves to determine our future conduct, nor can any man foresee what shall happen; but as far as one may hazard a conjecture there is a great possibility that I shall never marry. I should hardly engage in an affair of that nature purely for money, nor do I believe that my infatuation will ever be strong enough to persuade me that people can live without it; besides, unless there be violence done to my inclinations by the power of some gentle nymph. I had much rather listen to the drum and trumpet than any softer sound whatever."

Two  
Scottish  
ladies.

The stoic in him finds further expression a month later when he says that "perhaps there is a possibility of going through the business of the world without any strong connection or attachment to anything that is in it and with a kind of indifference as to what happens." And by way of commentary, unwitting or designed, we have this delightfully naïve confession—

"I have lately fallen into the acquaintance (by mere chance) of two young Scotch ladies, with whose conversation I am infinitely delighted. They are birds of a fine feather, and very rare in this country. One of them is a wife, <sup>(1)</sup> the other a maid. The former has the strongest understanding, the other has the prettiest face; but as I am not disposed to become the slave of either, the matron stands first. I mention this circumstance to clear up all doubt that might rise from the subject; and I speak of these ladies to show that we should not despair, and that some satisfaction may be found even where it is least expected."

(1) Wright says there is good reason to conclude that the elder lady was Mrs. Forbes, wife of John, only son of the famous Lord President,



Two years had elapsed since Lord Bury's appointment as colonel; he was expected to visit the regiment in April. His lieutenant-colonel's reflections are amusing: "He'll stay six weeks, and then swear there's no enduring it any longer, and beg leave to return. 'Wolfe, you'll stay in the Highlands; you can't, with any face, ask to quit the regiment so dispersed; and when you have clothed and sent them to their different quarters, towards the end of November you shall come to London, my dear friend, for three months.' This will be his discourse, and I must say, 'My Lord, you are very kind!'" Lord Bury proved more kind in one respect than Wolfe anticipated: in another he proved himself less than kind—in some ways a worthy successor of the victor of Culloden, assuming, that is, any of the stories of the Duke of Cumberland to be true. The colonel took a sympathetic view of Wolfe's desire to escape from his "long confinement," and leave of absence was granted in May. But if Lord Bury showed himself sensible of Wolfe's claim to consideration, he was guilty of an act which went far to undo any good that Wolfe's attitude towards the inhabitants might have accomplished, for though Wolfe did not like them he seems to have treated them as human beings. When his Lordship reached Inverness it was proposed to entertain him on the Duke of Cumberland's birthday as a mark of loyalty to his Royal Highness: an idea which it is hard to reconcile with the reputation of the Butcher. Lord Bury suggested that it would be a better compliment to the Duke to celebrate the following day, that of course being the anniversary of Culloden. Confronted by a proposal which was an outrage to half the locality, the embarrassed

officials after taking time to consider regretted that it was impossible to comply with the suggestion, and Lord Bury coerced them by saying that he had told his men of the forthcoming celebration, and would not answer for the consequences if it did not take place. It is a pity we have no letter from Wolfe giving his view of a proceeding which was as inane as it was cruel.

## CHAPTER V

### IRELAND, PARIS, AND THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND

LIEUT.-COL. WOLFE'S nine months in Inverness gave him a sense of cramp, professional and mental, if not physical. On a bright May morning he set out with certain companies of his regiment along the road by Loch Ness to Fort Augustus at its south-west corner—"a grandly wild" long summer day's march, as Wright calls it. Fort Augustus was among the strategic points selected after the rising of '15 and strengthened after '45. It was one of the radiating centres of the military posts established for the purpose of disarming and cowing the recalcitrant, and policing the Highlands generally. At Fort Augustus, Wolfe received his furlough permit, and with the eagerness of the schoolboy gathering up his belongings for the summer holidays, made arrangements to get away at once. His plans were to visit Ireland, London, and Paris. From Fort Augustus he went to Perth, Glasgow, and Portpatrick. During his journey he called at many of the out-of-the-way military posts and saw a good deal of the method by which outlaws were hunted down, and, it is to be feared, by which in some cases outlaws were made. Whole pages of Scottish history at this period seem to be lifted bodily, with names and locale changed, out of Ireland's record; there was the same bitter, often bloody, conflict between large sections of peasantry and the representatives of the Crown; and the factor on a confiscated Scottish estate carried his

Leaving  
Scotland.

life in his hands just as the agents of unpopular landlords in Ireland have always done in times of agrarian agitation. It is a gloomy picture, though one which we know was destined to brighten with each succeeding generation.

An  
anecdote.

Wolfe had much to say from time to time in criticism of the common soldier, but he looked upon the wearer of the King's uniform as a superior person in the class to which he belonged. One day during this Scottish journey Wolfe left his servant in charge of his horse, and on his return found a grenadier holding both his own and the servants' animals. Wolfe was very angry. "Sirrah," he said when the groom appeared, "what do you mean by thus deserting your post and taking up the time of this soldier? Had I employed him, as you have, it would have been proper enough, but can you be such a fool as to think that a man who has the honour to wear the King's uniform and is engaged in the service of his country, ought to supply the place of an idle servant? Know that it is your duty and my command that you wait upon the soldiers and not the soldiers upon you!" It might be an extract from Fielding or Smollett; the note of over-emphasis is characteristic.

Ireland in  
1752.

Wolfe's uncle, Major Walter, was living in Dublin; the veterans, young and old, looked forward to meeting with keen interest, the keener perhaps because they differed on many points of military economy. Walter Wolfe was of the school which thought bull-dog courage of more importance than training; his nephew was certainly not indifferent to the claims of the bull-dog, but if he had had to make a choice would have favoured discipline before

reckless devotion. From Portpatrick to Donaghadee in a primitive flat-bottomed boat, and through the north-eastern counties of Ireland by still more primitive and ricketty post-chaise, was an ordeal, unaccustomed though the traveller was to anything approaching luxury in locomotion. Wolfe was charmed with Irish scenery, though his quick eye detected plenty of room for improvements particularly in planting and the draining of boggy grounds. He was told that the best estates were "involved deeply in debt, the tenants racked and plundered, and consequently industry and good husbandry disappointed or destroyed."<sup>1</sup> The Irish problem was then becoming, if it had not already become, pretty much what it has been throughout the intervening century and a half, with the difference that Ireland had its Parliament to assist the ventilation of its grievances. The *Freeman's Journal* was hammering away at British interference in Irish affairs, and when Wolfe was in Dublin its proprietor, Charles Lucas, was hiding in England from a warrant out for his arrest.<sup>2</sup> Lords-lieutenant themselves were absentees for three-fourths of their term, one part of Dublin was pretentiously gay on the proceeds of rack rents while the other was in a state of squalid wretchedness,<sup>3</sup> and Irish distress was gradually working up to a point which was to give the oratory of Flood and Grattan its dynamic force. It was an Ireland steeped

<sup>1</sup> Lecky (*England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii, p. 317) seeks to correct the common view that Irish life in the first half of the eighteenth century was "altogether corrupt, frivolous, grotesque and barbarous: among many and glaring vices some real public spirit and intellectual energy may be discovered."

<sup>2</sup> Lawless: *Story of the Nations: Ireland*, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> Lecky: *England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii, p. 318.

in ignorance and superstition on the one hand ; poor, shabby-genteel, and trying to keep up appearances on the other ; the Ireland of whose homes Goldsmith said with a fine native touch—

Some Irish houses where things are so so  
A gammon of bacon hangs up for a show,  
But as to think of eating the thing they take pride in  
They'd as soon think of eating the pan it is fried in.

**The Boyne.** As to Wolfe's doings and impressions in Ireland we have scanty information. He took the opportunity of visiting the scene of the battle of the Boyne ; his reflections would not be confined to the military side ; he stood upon the historic ground where "Dutch William" had scared the pusillanimous James II to flight and asylum in France ; and he had only a few weeks before left the neighbourhood of Culloden where he had taken part in what would probably be the last effort of the Stuarts to recover the throne James had forfeited. If James had possessed the personality, the chivalry, and the pluck of his grandson, Ireland might have preserved what Scotland was unable to restore, and if there had been no Hanoverian succession how different would have been British history, how different Wolfe's own life. Sight of the monument erected to the memory of Schomberg gave Wolfe more satisfaction than "all the variety" of other spots he had visited, "and perhaps there is not another piece of ground in the world that I could take so much pleasure to observe." After a week in Dublin, which appeared to him to be "a prodigious city : <sup>1</sup> the streets crowded with

<sup>1</sup> Lecky says, "In the middle of the eighteenth century Dublin was in dimensions and population the second city in the Empire."

people of a large size and well limbed, and the women very handsome," he went south, then crossed to Bristol, spent some time in the West of England, and arrived at Blackheath about the time that England brought her calendar into conformity with the Gregorian. Wolfe probably reached home only to lose eleven days of reckoning, for those who went to bed on the night of Wednesday, 2nd September, 1752, did not get up till the morning of the 14th, "and found themselves no more refreshed than after an ordinary night's rest."<sup>1</sup>

Wolfe's anxiety was now to know whether he was to be allowed to go abroad. He had thrown out hints more than once that if there were no chance of active service at home he would join a foreign army where further enlightenment would be possible. However, his anxiety was soon relieved. Permission came and he set out for Paris early in October; Lord Bury's father, the Earl of Albemarle, was then British Minister in France, and to him Wolfe carried an introduction from the colonel himself. It had its advantages of course, though Wolfe soon found that this rather remarkable specimen of an ambassador, who frequently, according to Horace Walpole, did not grace his own banquet table when guests were present, was not of all the service that might have been expected. It was at a peculiarly tense moment in the history of France that Wolfe set foot in Paris. Forces were gathering that were to have immediate effect on French fortunes at home and abroad, and forty years later were to sweep the Bourbons from the throne. Louis XV was King, but Madame de

Wolfe in  
Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Wright, p. 231.

Pompadour was ruler ; her influence in the councils of State was supreme ;<sup>1</sup> she wielded the imperial sceptre in return for the amusement of the monarch. "She gained and long kept the power that she coveted ; filled the Bastille with her enemies ; made and unmade ministers ; appointed and removed generals. Great questions of policy were at the mercy of her caprices. Through her frivolous vanity, her personal likes and dislikes, all the great departments of Government—army, navy, war, foreign affairs, justice, finance—changed from hand to hand incessantly, and this at a time of crisis when the kingdom needed the steadiest and surest guidance."<sup>2</sup> Only one person near the throne dared to show his disgust that Madame de Pompadour should be allowed to stand not only between King and Queen, but between the King and his duty to the nation. That person was the Dauphin, and for his independence he was humiliated before the whole Court. Wolfe had not been long in Paris before, apparently at the play, he came near Madame ; he described her as "a very agreeable woman." In January he was presented with others to the King and the Royal Family, and to Madame de Pompadour. She entertained them at her toilette, it being her habit to receive visitors in her dressing-room. "We found her curling her hair. She is extremely handsome, and by her conversation with the ambassador and others that were present, I judge she must have a great deal of wit and understanding." That meeting stirs one's imagination. To Madame de Pompadour, history

<sup>1</sup> Waddington : *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, vol. ii, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> Parkman : *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. i, p. 17, Ed. 1899.



traces many of the disasters of France in the third quarter of the eighteenth century; to gratify her European vanities, New France suffered; and a principal instrument in the undoing of French empire beyond the Atlantic was to be the tall, bright-eyed, and not too healthy-looking young English officer who now deemed it a privilege to observe the mighty dame curl her hair. History has its humours as well as its romance!

Paris must have been a hot-bed of temptation in that winter of 1752-3 to our young lieutenant-colonel fresh from the almost Spartan severity of Inverness. He had not gone to France, however, to frivel away his time in social dissipation. Up every morning not later than seven, he worked till twelve, then dressed and visited, dined at two, attended some entertainment about five, and went to bed at eleven. "This way of living is directly opposite to the practice of the place; but I find it impossible to pursue the business I came upon and to comply with the customs and manners of the inhabitants." The business he came upon was to study foreign armies at first hand, to see something of polite society abroad, and to learn to speak French, to dance and to fence. Among the friends he either found or made in Paris were Philip Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield's son, who was an attaché at the Embassy, the young Duke of Richmond, and Guy Carleton, the man who was one day successfully to defend against the Americans the city on the St. Lawrence which Wolfe was to take from France in the interests of America. The Duke of Richmond wanted a military tutor; Wolfe was consulted, possibly with the idea that he might offer himself for the post; he recommended his friend Carleton. His

How he  
spent his  
time.

parents thought he should have put himself forward.<sup>1</sup> Wolfe's answer was that he did not always prefer his own interest to that of his friends, that apart from his liking for Carleton he did not feel equal to the task—assuredly it would not have been acceptable to one so eager to learn, to be called upon to teach—and that “as for the pension that might follow it is very certain it would not become me to accept it. I can't take money from any one but the King, my master, or from some of his blood.” Wolfe wanted money but not at the expense of his pride. His correspondence while in Paris brought him news of Miss Lawson. He admitted that he had not yet recovered from the “disorder” into which he was thrown by his great love for her. He could not hear her name mentioned without “twitching.” “My amour has not been without its use. It has defended me against other women, introduced a great deal of philosophy and tranquillity as to all objects of our strongest affection, and something softened the disposition to severity and rigour that I had contracted in the camp, trained up as I was, from infancy to the conclusion of the Peace, in war and tumult.” He told his mother he should probably never marry, but in a letter to his father from Paris he suggests that he rather dreads the possibility of a life of single blessedness. He reflects that “with us soldiers” marriage must be late for various reasons, among them prudence. “We are not able to feed our wives and children till we begin to decline. It must be a solitary

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bradley (*Wolfe*, p. 71) says Wolfe “was offered the position of governor to the young Duke of Richmond, but refused it.” This is clearly a mistake, as we may see from Wolfe's letter to his mother given by Wright, pp. 252-3.

kind of latter life to leave no relations nor objects to take up our thoughts and affections—to be as it were alone in the world without any connection with mankind but the tie of common friendships which are at best as you have experienced but loose and precarious.”

Wolfe had been in Paris four months when it seemed that at last the purpose of which he had often talked in Scotland and for which in large measure he had left England, was to be attained. Lord Albemarle told him that the French King would encamp a great part of his army in the summer, and proposed, to Wolfe's infinite satisfaction, that the Duke should command him to attend as a representative of the British army. “The French are to have three or four different camps; the Austrians and Prussians will probably assemble some corps, so that I may before the summer have seen half the armies in Europe at least.” The Duke's response was a command which, though half anticipated, was none the less keenly disappointing. It was that Wolfe should return to his regiment at once. Wolfe was inclined to rebel, and was sarcastic at the expense of “a major and an adjutant (if the colonel is to be indulged himself)” who were “not to be considered equal to the great task of exercising in our frivolous fashion a battalion or two of soldiers.” Fears—if they existed—that Wolfe might, by too close contact with foreign armies, be induced to abandon his own were not the only cause of this sudden recall: the Major of the 20th had been incapacitated by a fit of apoplexy, and as Lord Bury, its colonel, was not prepared to sacrifice himself for the sake of the regiment, Wolfe's presence in Scotland was essential.

A disappointment.

**Return to  
Glasgow.**

Disgusted and disappointed, Wolfe had to return. He took Blackheath for a few days on his way, and then started on a journey north which cost him much discomfort—discomfort of the body which vexation of spirit aggravated. A new sort of close post-chaise had been put on the roads about this time, “machines,” said Wolfe, “purposely constructed to torture the unhappy carcases that are placed in them.” He had recourse to post-horses, and fared little better, having two spills at the hazard of his neck. His troubles did not end with his arrival in Glasgow. The regiment was in melancholy circumstances; officers “ruined, desperate and without hopes of preferment,” the major dead, one ensign had been in convulsions, and another was seized with palsy, and Wolfe was so affected by the prevailing distress that he nearly fainted. To what all these things were due we are not told, but they were enough in all conscience, apart from his dislike of Scotland, to make Wolfe look forward to August, when the regiment was to march out of “this dark and dismal country.” Three weeks later he wrote, “We are all sick, officers and soldiers: I am amongst the best and not quite well.” The weather was in large measure responsible, and Wolfe attributed his immunity to the “store of health” amassed in France, which he hoped would last out his stay in Scotland, “though the consumption will be very considerable.” Gloomy as his reports were, there was diversion in the granite city in the shape of plays, concerts, balls, dinners and suppers. The food, he said, was execrable, and the wines “approached to poison.” The men drank excessively, and the ladies were cold to everything but a bagpipe—“I wrong

them ; there is not one that does not melt away at the sound of an estate ; there's the weak side of this soft sex." He dined one day with the Duchess of Hamilton, the famous Elizabeth Gunning, who had been married rather more than a year and lived within ten miles of Glasgow. A little grumble at the condition of things in the army that made "the doing of one's duty well, and not talking of it, the roundabout way to preferment" ; a complaint that he had "hardly passion enough of any kind to find present pleasure or feed future hope" ; an apology to his mother for an exhibition of ill-temper and a plea that if she thought he had any good qualities they might be set in opposition to the bad ones ; and we come to September 9th, 1753. On that date Wolfe with his regiment left Scotland for the south.

When he crossed the Esk he saluted the soil of England with almost effusive gladness, and the whole regiment had a feeling that it was going home from some foreign land. Wolfe at once perceived a welcome change in many respects. "The English are clean and laborious, and the Scotch excessively dirty and lazy, though far short indeed of what we found at a greater distance from the borders." The men's health improved with the march ; they were so active that they wore their clothes threadbare, and Wolfe believed that by the time they arrived at Warwick "they would be the most dirty, ragged regiment that the Duke has seen for years." Though every day he moved further south the country appeared richer and more delightful—and he found the Lancashire women surprisingly handsome after "the hard-favoured Scotch lasses"—he grew heartily sick of the slow movement of the march. It was not agreeable to his

A long  
march.

"disposition of mind." At Warwick he had some hunting, and he enjoyed the "extremely beautiful country." The regiment moved on to Reading with Dover as its objective. At Reading he once more complained of the state of morals among both officers and men: "If I stay much longer with the regiment I shall be perfectly corrupt; the officers are loose and profligate, and soldiers are very devils." Healthy as he had described the men to be at Warrington in September, at Reading in November he said they were subject to exercises which were too much for their constitutions. "Our debaucheries enervate and unman us." Wolfe's own standard of conduct was so high that it would be natural for him to exaggerate shortcomings in others, and his views always tended to extremes; but there can be little question as to the reasonableness of his strictures. Contemporary records bear him out. If Wolfe could say so much of his own men what was his opinion of others? The 20th, it was conceded, was the best disciplined regiment in the British army,<sup>1</sup> and one would fain believe that Wolfe's sharp condemnation meant no more than that his officers and men fell far short of his ideal—an impossible one in the circumstances of the time.

<sup>1</sup> Bradley: *Wolfe*, p. 83.

## CHAPTER VI

### BEGINNING OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

ENGLAND has never passed through a more uncertain and inglorious time than in the eight years between the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle and the beginning of the Seven Years' War. She lacked leaders, and a corrupt system strangled the efforts of individual patriots. Fortunately for her, venality abroad left her great opponent unable to seize opportunities which party prejudices and personal pique supplied in ample measure. It was a period of pretence in Europe ; of irregular and scarcely intermittent warfare beyond the seas. The Treaty of 1748 involved suspension of hostilities between the great powers : in India and in America the conflict between French and English was abandoned in one place only to break out in another. In the East the French intrigued and fought for their own hand by fighting for one or other of the native princes or pretenders : the English did the same. It was a foregone conclusion that if the French took one side in a local quarrel the English took the other. Across the Atlantic the conditions varied only with the character of the country and of the people. In the East the struggle was to command political influence and trade privileges by alliance with or control of the natives ; in the West to build up empire, to promote commerce, and to establish strong offshoots of the motherland by settlement, by exploration, by alliance with Iroquois and Huron, and by the appropriation of forest and

Irregular warfare.



river and vast expanses of territory whose very limits were unknown. In India it was a duel between Dupleix and Clive ; in America between New France and New England.

Anglo-  
French  
rivalry.

From the time that John Smith founded Jamestown in 1607 and Champlain Quebec in 1608, England and France had been in competition for the riches of North America, but their methods differed essentially. English settlements had been planted down the coast for hundreds of miles, and agriculture and trade were their principal objects. The French, with a view partly to the empire of the West, partly to the monopoly of the fur trade, had taken possession of the St. Lawrence, and so much of the great river-and-lake system north, south, and west as bands of intrepid explorers succeeded in traversing. La Salle's voyage from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico led to the claim of France to the whole of America west of the Alleghanies and to the erection of a chain of forts which were intended to confine the English to the coast strip from Canada to Louisiana. In pursuance of this great ambition the French were active on the Ohio during 1753. Washington—then twenty-one years of age—was chosen by Governor Dinwiddie to carry his message of protest to the aggressors, and the following year it was intended to build a fort at the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, where Pittsburg stands to-day. Whilst the building was in progress the French appeared, demolished the works, and put up Fort Duquesne in their place. Washington was on his way with a force intended to garrison the new fort when news reached him that the French were in possession. His expedition ended in disaster.



Things were now almost desperate. The French were masters, many of the Indian tribes drew their scalping-knives on behalf of the winning side, and not an English flag waved beyond the Alleghanies.<sup>1</sup> Braddock was sent out in 1755 with a considerable force, to which Wolfe's regiment contributed one hundred men; a person worse fitted for the task in hand, says Parkman, could scarcely have been found:<sup>2</sup> the French were to be attacked at four points at once, and Braddock was to lead the attack on Fort Duquesne. An officer of the old school, he was "a bigot to military rules," and his inability to adapt himself to unaccustomed conditions cost the empire and the colonies dear. In the year of his defeat, Admirals Boscawen, Hawke, and others were engaged in endeavouring to prevent French reinforcements from crossing the Atlantic. Yet there was no declaration of war. It was in the middle of 1755 that Wolfe declared "all notions of peace are now at an end." He pointed to "the embargo laid upon shipping, the violent press for seamen, and the putting soldiers on board our fleet" as evidence that the maritime strength of the enemy was "by no means contemptible." Vigorous assaults were expected both in Europe and in America. During the last year or two it seemed as though France and England had decided to give themselves breathing time whilst allowing their children over-seas to keep the quarrel going and furtively supporting, if not openly encouraging them, to fight. France gave what seemed like tangible proof of peaceful aims when she recalled Dupleix in 1754, especially as Dupleix had done

<sup>1</sup> Parkman : *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. i, pp. 132-167.

<sup>2</sup> *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, vol. i, p. 110

nothing more than serve her almost as brilliantly as Clive was serving England. Dupleix was a knight sacrificed on the Imperial chess-board. The real spirit of the time is seen in the orders issued from Paris to the Governor of Canada that he was to invite the Red Man to destroy English trading stations, but on no account was his complicity to be discovered, because the two nations were not at war !<sup>1</sup>

War  
declared.

It was not till May, 1756, that war was formally declared. By that time England, to secure her own safety, had imported a large number of Hessians, and in order to protect the interests of Hanover, had entered into alliance with Prussia. George II considered—or pretended to consider—that Maria Theresa had not kept faith with him, and she, hating Frederick more than ever now that her old supporter had joined hands with him, turned to France—in other words, to Madame de Pompadour, who on her part hated Frederick because he had made her the butt of his sarcasm. A woman of high moral character herself, Maria Theresa addressed the Pompadour as her “ dear cousin,” and the flattery of the mistress secured the adhesion of Louis XV and his ministers. The task was the easier because Louis XV had also changed his view ; he now favoured an alliance with Austria. ■ The year was a bad one for England. Admiral Byng ignominiously failed to relieve Minorca ; the whole country was horrified by the news of the Black Hole of Calcutta, and Montcalm, the brilliant soldier against whom Wolfe was to be matched at Quebec,

<sup>1</sup> G. Le M. Bretton : *Social England*, vol. v. Parkman : *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. i, p. 190.

■ Hassall : *Balance of Power*, 1715-1789, p. 249.

captured Fort Oswego. Shame, horror, and indignation took possession of the public as reverse after reverse became known, and with a weak ministry at home little or nothing was done. Pitt had offended both the King and Newcastle by his fearless resumption of freelance criticism, and was not in the Government. He became Secretary of State under the Duke of Devonshire in December, but the ministry did not last long; there was an interval during which the country, at war, was without a ministry. In the interests of the commonwealth, Newcastle and Pitt had to compose their differences, and it was not till Newcastle in June, 1757, agreed to become the figure-head of a Government in which Pitt supplied the brains, the character, the controlling force that the British star once more began to rise, slowly, occasionally clouded, but surely, until it shone all-unchallenged in the very meridian.

During the years when England was labouring under the dead weight of incompetence alike in the Council Chamber and the services, Wolfe was watching events from various stations in the South of England. His letters to his mother and father continue to reflect at once his own striking individuality and the local conditions as they were affected by the movements of the world at large. We will run through them as rapidly as may be. Dover Castle did not please him: it was not as snug as he would have liked, and he could not help wishing that the moderns who destroyed some of its "antiquity" had demolished it altogether. Before he left it he had come to consider it as "a vile dungeon," "a melancholy, dreadful winter station." The castle was haunted, of course, but the presence of the

Wolfe's  
movements

supernatural does not seem to have affected him much, whilst the tediousness of the time not devoted to routine duties affected him a good deal. He rode on the downs and did some shooting, bagging an occasional pheasant or partridge, which he dare not send home, "as we are not authorised by law to kill them, and as they examine strictly upon the great roads I should be unwilling to be reputed a smuggler." Dover Castle, he says, "would be a prison to a man of pleasure, but an officer may put up with it." The ladies of Dover complained through his mother that Wolfe's officers were lacking in gallantry. He replied in a spirit of banter that dancing and all its light train of amusements had their risks, and to those whose years were creeping on might appear vain or contemptible.

"Notwithstanding this, I always encourage our young people to frequent balls and assemblies. It softens their manners and makes them civil; and commonly I go along with them, to see how they conduct themselves. I am only afraid they shall fall in love and marry. Whenever I perceive the symptoms, or anybody else makes the discovery, we fall upon the delinquent without mercy till he grows out of conceit with his new passion. By this method we have broke through many an amorous alliance, and dissolved many ties of eternal love and affection. My experience in these matters help me to find out my neighbour's weakness, and furnishes me with arms to oppose his folly. I am not, however, always so successful as could be wished. Two or three of the most simple and insensible in other respects have triumphed over my endeavours, but are seated upon the stool of repentance for the rest of their days."

Among the  
Jacobites  
again.

In February, 1754, he had some idea that his regiment might be selected for East Indian service. But as Lord Bury was exempted from such service by his position as aide-de-camp to the King, "I do not suppose he would think it consistent to let his

regiment embark without him. So we are reserved for more brilliant service.”<sup>1</sup> At the end of March the regiment left Dover to be reviewed at Guildford by the colonel, and Wolfe got leave of absence, part of which he spent with Sir John Mordaunt, the uncle of Miss Lawson. The sight of her picture upon the dining-room walls upset him for a day or two, “but time, the never-failing aid to distressed lovers, has made the semblance of her a pleasing but not a dangerous object. However, I find it best not to trust myself to the lady’s eyes, or put confidence in any resolutions of my own.”<sup>2</sup> When he returned to his regiment early in October, it had gone into winter quarters at Exeter, and almost his first business was to provide the contingent for Braddock’s “Ohio party.” It was fortunate Wolfe did not join the party himself.

In Exeter he was in the heart of a Jacobite community. “I begin to flatter myself that we shall soften the rigorous proceedings of our adversaries here and live with them on better terms than hitherto. It is not our interest to quarrel with any but the French.” Among the means he took to “soften the rigorous” was the dance. “Would you believe it that no Devonshire squire dances more than I do? What no consideration of pleasure or complaisance for the sex could effect the love of peace and harmony has brought about. I have danced the officers into the good graces of the Jacobite women hereabouts, who were prejudiced against them. It falls hard upon me because of my indolence and indifference

The  
Jacobites of  
Devonshire

<sup>1</sup> Beckles Willson: *Nineteenth Century*, Sept., 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Wright mentions that Miss Lawson, who meant so much to Wolfe, died unmarried in March, 1759.

about it." All the same it is on record that he showed much "talent in the science" and that he was generally "ambitious to gain a tall graceful woman to be his partner, as well as a good dancer." The sort of barrier he had to break down is shown by the fact that at a ball to celebrate the King's birthday every man save one was wearing the King's uniform. "The female branches of the Tory families came readily enough, but not one man would accept the invitation. If it had not fallen my way to see such an instance of folly I should not readily be brought to conceive it." Wolfe found himself "hand and glove with the Right Worshipful the Mayor" and reported that "the people seem tolerably well disposed towards us at present"—a condition of things which he hoped would last his time, "for, as the town has nothing in it either inviting or entertaining, the circumstances of a civil war would make it intolerable." Wolfe's diversions, it is interesting to note, did not include cards. He had no grave objection to them, especially in people of a certain age, but he thought that young folks might be led into excesses and sacrifice the hours which should be given to improvement. In the beginning of January, 1755, he had to attend a court-martial in Bristol—a duty he always disliked.

Premonitions.

From Bristol he wrote home: "Folks are surprised to see the meagre, consumptive, decaying figure of the son, when the father and mother preserve such good looks. The campaigns of 1743, '4, '5, '6, and '7 stripped me of my bloom and the winters in Scotland and at Dover have brought me almost to old age and infirmity, and this without any remarkable intemperance. A few years more or less are of very little

consequence to the common run of men, and therefore I need not lament that I am perhaps somewhat nearer my end than others of my time. I think and write upon these points without being at all moved." Wolfe's trouble, his health apart, was always about funds, and he loathed the necessity of calling upon his father's ever-ready purse. "I am eight-and-twenty years of age, a lieutenant-colonel of Foot, and I cannot say that I am master of fifty pounds." The only ground on which, when hard pressed, he felt justified in turning to the parental exchequer was that to be cramped and tied down by circumstances when his thoughts should be free and at large took his attention off the most important parts of his duty. "That spirit will guide others but indifferently which bends under its own wants." He longed for advancement with a longing which in a less brilliant man would have been wholly unreasonable. His ambition was encouraged by his friend, Sir John Mordaunt, by his uncle, and by his father. His uncle wished him to make a considerable figure in the profession, and he was prepared to serve even at sea if he could only get the chance, great though he knew his agony from sickness would be. With the prospect of war in his mind throughout the year 1755, he sometimes thought he might be sent to Virginia, sometimes that he might be called upon to go to Holland. "It is no time to think of what is convenient or agreeable," he wrote in February, "that service is the best in which we are the most useful. For my part I am determined never to give myself a moment's concern about the nature of the duty His Majesty is pleased to order us upon. It will be sufficient comfort to you two, as far as my person is concerned at least it will be a reasonable



consolation, to reflect that the Power which has hitherto preserved me may, if it be His pleasure, continue to do so ; if not, that it is but a few days or a few years more or less and that those who perish in their duty, and in the service of their country die honourably. I hope I shall have resolution and firmness enough to meet every appearance of danger without great concern and not be over-solicitous about the event." In all his letters Wolfe seemed to have a premonition that his life was to be a short one. When he wrote those words he was, as he said a week or ten days before, twenty-eight, and he had four and a half years to live.

New  
colonels.

From March, 1755, to March, 1757, Wolfe was shifted from Exeter to Winchester, Southampton, Canterbury, Devizes, Stroud, Cirencester and other places. It is not necessary to follow his marchings and counter-marchings in detail. In 1755 he suffered a serious disappointment. His colonel became Earl of Albemarle by the death of his father at the end of the previous year, and Wolfe was on tenter-hooks to learn whether he was to succeed to the official command of the regiment which in fact he had commanded for so long. Three months of expectancy, and he was informed that Colonel Honeywood had been appointed. Wolfe was hurt, and declared he would not serve one moment longer than honour demanded even if he should starve. He got over his vexation sooner than might be expected, and assured his mother that " if you arm yourself with philosophy you are mistress of all events." War might come to his aid, but he dreaded the distress war might mean to the country generally and to his mother in particular. Whatever happened he was solicitous for his



mother's comfort, and when it was proposed that his father might resign his colonelcy in his favour, the son settling an annuity upon him, he refused on the ground that "a soldier's life in war is too great an uncertainty for you to hazard a necessary part of your income upon." If war did not come then Wolfe would "jog on in the easiest position in the army, and sleep and grow fat." A good deal more philosophy was required a year later when Honeywood was transferred and his place was taken by Colonel William Kingsley.

Events, however, gave Wolfe plenty to think about besides his own personal fortunes. He speculated incessantly on the needs of the country, and in a remarkable letter to Rickson, who was now in Scotland, written in view of the possibility that the French would again find allies among the Highlanders, he outlined the plan—it was sufficiently drastic—by which he would deal with the first outbreak in order to avoid "a succession of errors and a train of ill-behaviour," which made "the last Scotch war," he said, difficult to match in history. He recommended Rickson to practice musketry firing with balls: "Firing balls at objects teaches the soldiers to level incomparably, makes the recruits steady, and removes the foolish apprehension that seizes young soldiers when they first load their arms with bullets. We fire first singly, then by files, one, two, three or more, then by ranks, and lastly by platoons; and the soldiers see the effects of their shots, especially at a mark or upon water. We shoot obliquely and in different situations on ground, from heights downwards and contrariwise." Wolfe apologised for suggesting so much on the ground that possibly it

Hints to  
Rickson.

might not have been thought of by Rickson's commander—a casual remark which goes some way to explain wherein Wolfe himself was ahead of his fellows.

Army  
officers  
generally.

It may sound invidious, but it is not unreasonable to say that if Braddock had been as ready as Wolfe would have been to adapt himself to the military conditions which confronted him on his advance to Fort Duquesne, the disgrace of that 9th of July, 1755, in the wooded defiles beyond the Monongahela would have been avoided. Wolfe would not have rejected the representations of Washington nor flouted the Indian chiefs who placed their unrivalled knowledge of forest warfare at his disposal. Braddock, with all his courage, his strength of character, his unquestioned ability and patriotism, was simply incapable of rising superior to the teachings of the school in which he had learnt his business. He ought never to have fallen into the ambush laid for him: and when he was in it he destroyed a slender chance of escape by treating men who endeavoured to save themselves without running away, as so many cowardly curs. It was the tragedy of cast-iron system. When the news reached England in August Wolfe was not in a position to deliver serious judgment. From the accounts to hand, he said: "I do believe that the cowardice and ill-behaviour of the men far exceeded the ignorance of the chief, who, though not a master of the difficult art of war, was yet a man of sense and courage. I have but a very mean opinion of the Infantry in general. I know their discipline to be bad and their valour precarious. They are easily put into disorder and hard to recover out of it. They frequently kill their officers through

fear and murder one another in their confusion." In that view Wolfe was not quite judicial. The fault lay not with the men but with the masters, the Government and the officers, to whom they should look for guidance. A foreign critic of the time said that the British troops were "an army of lions led by asses"; that there were lions among the asses and curs among the lions does not rob the description of its brute force, and Wolfe himself qualified his angry outburst by admitting that the method of training and instructing British troops was "extremely defective. We are lazy in time of peace and of course want vigilance and activity in war. Our military education is by far the worst in Europe, and all our concerns are treated with contempt or totally neglected. It will cost us very dear some time hence." In a passage full of significance, he wrote to his mother in October, 1755, at a time when the French were busy with their fleet and every hour brought new fears of invasion, though war had not yet been declared: "The officers of the army in general are persons of so little application to business and have been so ill educated that it must not surprise you to hear that a man of common industry is in reputation amongst them. I reckon it a very great misfortune to this country that I, your son, who have I know but a very moderate capacity and some degree of diligence a little above the ordinary run, should be thought, as I am, one of the best officers of my rank in the service. I am not at all vain of the distinction." Such a comparison he thought would do even a man of genius very little honour. "The consequence will be very fatal to me in the end for as I rise in rank people will expect some considerable

performances, and I shall be induced, in support of an ill-got reputation, to be lavish of my life and shall probably meet that fate which is the ordinary effect of such conduct." A prophetic instinct surely!

Our  
mighty  
Navy.

Despite his criticisms Wolfe believed the army would give an excellent account of itself if the French should succeed in what every one believed to be their designs. Was he putting his trust in the Hessians, whose presence was the sharpest of all reflections on the state of the army? Wolfe had confidence in the fleet which was more formidable than any England had ever had, and he took a run to Portsmouth specially "to enjoy the dreadful though pleasing sight of our mighty navy." He was among the first to recognise what the sea meant to England's safety, and there was in him none of that petty jealousy which too long made the navy the rival rather than the sister service. Admiral Smith was so posted, said Wolfe in December, as to make any attempt on the part of the French to land "a little dangerous," and he regretted that they did not "discover the same degree of respect for us"—that is, for the army. "They wish for nothing so much as to be quietly ashore and then to make trial of our force," but we have "some incomparable battalions, the like of which cannot, I'll venture to say, be found in any army." Which, one wonders, were the incomparable battalions? Wolfe's general criticisms were so severe that an incomparable battalion in his eyes must have been a very fine body indeed.

1756.  
Admiral  
Byng.

No relief to the tension came with the new year. A supine ministry shared Wolfe's gloomier views as to the army, but did nothing during all these months to improve its *morale* and fighting capacity. Recruiting

went on with some vigour, but the raw material was not worked up with the energy demanded by the critical character of the situation. Troops were moved from place to place, and the Guards were sent to Dover much against their inclination, judging from some remarks which Wolfe made. "Would you believe that there are many who call themselves soldiers, who, to excuse their shameful idleness, cry out that they believe there will be no war—no invasion—and so act as if they were persuaded of the truth of it?" Dread of invasion made the Government<sup>1</sup> unwilling to move sufficiently early or in sufficient strength to save Minorca. Instructions that Byng's force should be supplemented from the Gibraltar garrison were disobeyed because an attack by the Spaniards was feared. Byng gave battle to La Galissonière off Port Mahon, but instead of pressing home the advantage he gained, he retired to Gibraltar. The Minorca garrison was doomed, and Blakeney, its brave general, surrendered with the honours of war. Byng was denounced as a traitor: he was really an ordinary individual, who could not rise superior to the official atmosphere, and Wolfe summed the matter up in a simple question: "Are the measures taken for the relief of Minorca or the proceedings of our admiral to be most admired?" "The project of succouring Minorca and the execution of the great design," he wrote to his father, June 27th, 1756, "went hand in hand successfully and may probably end in a disgraceful peace. You are happy in your infirmity for 'tis a disgrace to act in these dishonourable times."

<sup>1</sup> The Newcastle Papers (*Add. MSS. British Museum*) are full of warnings sent over by the Government's secret agents.

Wolfe's  
indigna-  
tion.

Wolfe grew so impatient under the ordeal of national humiliation that whilst writing "the King of Prussia (God bless him !) is our only ally," he added fiercely, "I am sorry that they don't all unite against us that our strength might be fully exerted and our force known. I myself believe that we are a match for the combined fleets of Europe, especially if our admirals and generals were all of the same spirit." Against Byng he was as bitter as the ministers who sheltered themselves behind the obloquy which overwhelmed their servants. Wolfe, "an eye-witness of the consequences of his fatal conduct," condemned him on every ground: "If he did not personally engage through fear or declined it through treachery ; or if he went out with instructions not to be too forward in relieving Minorca, he deserves ten thousand deaths. An English admiral who accepts such instructions should lose his head, but, alas ! our affairs are falling down apace." He saw the country going fast upon its ruin as the result of "paltry projects" and the more ridiculous behaviour of those who were entrusted with its government. Wolfe's suggestion that the ministry by their instructions might have induced slackness on the part of the admiral was not justified. The suggestion reflects the state to which the minds of men had been reduced by invertebrate administration. The demoralisation was epidemic and few escaped. Courts-martial were held to condemn the past when every nerve and every muscle was wanted to assist the present. Byng was shot, "*pour encourager les autres*," as Voltaire said, and the King, who refused to give him the benefit of mercy recommended by the court, inflicted no punishment on the ministers who would have reaped

the glory if he had triumphed. The Governor of Gibraltar, Lieut.-Gen. Fowke, was also court-martialled, and sentenced to dismissal from the service. Wolfe was one of the court, and was much exercised by the fact that Cornwallis had been a party to the refusal to assist Eyng. Cornwallis had caught the general complaint. "I am heartily sorry to find him involved with the rest, of whose abilities or inclinations nobody has any very high notions; but Cornwallis is a man of approved courage and fidelity. He has unhappily been misled upon this occasion by people of not half his value."

In the midst of the excitement incident to the developments of a great war Wolfe found time to pen a long letter in response to an appeal for advice as to the best course of study for a young officer—Henry Townshend. The letter affords a clue to Wolfe's own studies. Assuming that young Townshend was master of the Latin and French languages, and had some knowledge of mathematics, the study of which "will greatly facilitate his progress in military matters," Wolfe continues—

A **COURSE**  
of study.

"As to the books that are fittest for his purpose, he may begin with *King of Prussia's Regulations for his Horse and Foot*, where the economy and good order of an army in the lower branches are extremely well established. Then there are the Memoirs of the Marquis de Santa Cruz, Feuquières, and Montecucculi; Folard's *Commentaries upon Polybius*, the *Projet de Tactique*, *L'Attaque et la Défense des Places*, par le Maréchal de Vauban, *Les Mémoires de Goulon*, *L'Ingénieur de Campagne*, le Sieur Renie for all that concerns artillery. Of the ancients, Vegetius, Cæsar, Thucydides, Xenophon's *Life of Cyrus* and *Retreat of the Ten Thousand Greeks*. I do not mention Polybius, because the *Commentaries* and the *History* naturally go together. Of later days, Davila, Guicciardini, Strada, and the *Memoirs of the Duc de Sully*. There is an abundance of military knowledge to be picked out of the lives of Gustavus Adolphus, and Charles XII,



King of Sweden, and of Zisca the Bohemian, and if a tolerable account could be got of the exploits of Scanderbeg, it would be inestimable ; for he excels all the officers, ancient and modern, in the conduct of a small defensive army. I met with him in the *Turkish History*, but nowhere else. The *Life of Suetonius*, too, contains many fine things in this way. There is a book lately published that I have heard commended, *L'Art de la Guerre Pratique*,—I suppose it is collected from all the best authors that treat of war ; and there is a little volume, entitled *Traité de la Petite Guerre* that your brother should take in his pocket when he goes upon out-duty and detachments. The Maréchal de Puysequir's book, too, is in esteem.

"I believe Mr. Townshend will think this catalogue long enough ; and if he has patience to read, and desire to apply (as I am persuaded he has), the knowledge contained in them, there is also wherewithal to make him a considerable person in his profession, and of course very useful and serviceable to his country. In general, the lives of all great commanders, and all good histories of warlike nations, will be instructive, and lead him naturally to endeavour to imitate what he must necessarily approve of. In these days of scarcity, and in these unlucky times, it is much to be wished that all our young soldiers of birth and education would follow your brother's steps, and, as they will have their turn to command, that they would try to make themselves fit for that important trust ; without it, we must sink under the superior abilities and indefatigable industry of our restless neighbours. In what a strange manner have we conducted our affairs in the Mediterranean. *Quelle belle occasion manquée !*"

Wolfe watched the course of events with eager expectancy, his anxieties being at once professional and patriotic. Changes, additions to, and movements in the army naturally were the order of the day. He kept a sharp eye on appointments going. "If any soldier is preferred when my time comes I shall acquaint the Secretary of War that I am sensible of the injury that is done me, and will take the earliest opportunity to put it out of his or any man's power to repeat it. Not while the war lasts ; for if 500 younger officers one after another were to rise before



me I should continue to move with the utmost diligence, to acquit myself to the country, and to show the ministers that they had acted unjustly. But I flatter myself that I shall never be forced to these disagreeable measures." What Mr. Bradley calls "a great temptation" came Wolfe's way within a few weeks of writing the words just quoted. His friends' exertions to secure him some more profitable post than that of lieutenant-colonel of Foot brought an offer from the Duke of Bedford, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, of the offices of Barrackmaster-General and Quartermaster-General of Ireland. Highly sensible of the honour done him, Wolfe accepted on one condition—that he was made colonel. If the rank of colonel were not given him he would return to his battalion immediately, or prefer to take service with the King of Prussia in the great war in which British troops apparently were not to be employed. The King thought Wolfe's "short service" would not justify his promotion; fresh efforts were, however, to be made to induce His Majesty to grant Wolfe's claim, and in the delay the chance of service came. His pretension had saved him from being side-tracked at a critical moment; his acceptance of the Irish appointment unconditionally might have changed the history of the British Empire. So much may depend on the ear man lends to the call to greater things; so is ambition justified.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FAILURES OF 1757

Pitt  
supreme.

WHEN Pitt came back to office in 1757 he came to power also. For the first time he found himself able to put a policy into force without serious opposition. He had England at his back. He was restored in response to the people's emphatic demand; it was said of him that he was a minister given by the people to the nation. Chesterfield's despondent view "We are no longer a nation" was disproved. The people, as opposed to the King, the place-hunters, the Parliamentarians, at least showed themselves a nation in their insistence that they should be led by one who was self-reliant and purposeful as he was fearless and incorruptible. After a period of intrigue and recrimination which make the domestic political record almost as complicated a tangle as European diplomacy after the death of Charles VI, England, so long in labour, as the King of Prussia put it, had at last brought forth a man. Pitt was the very antipodes of Walpole in conviction and temperament, as both were head and shoulders above their contemporaries in their own lines of statesmanship. Pitt, to adapt Johnson's gibe about Chesterfield, was a man among kings and a king among men. His insight, as Mr. Fortescue says, pierced the heart of things; he compassed great designs; his enthusiasm kindled the energy of subordinates, broke down the opposition of permanent officials, and carried his country forward on "an irresistible wave of patriotic sentiment."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A History of the British Army*, vol. iii, p. 248.

Pitt dared where other men hesitated. Indecision, **Decisive**  
 the bane of empire, was as unknown to him as **action.**  
 physical fear to James Wolfe, one of the instruments  
 by which he ultimately lifted the whole English race  
 to the proudest pitch of self-consciousness. During  
 his few months in office with the Duke of Devonshire  
 he set the chords vibrating. He sent back to Ger-  
 many the foreign mercenaries who were an hourly  
 reminder to the Briton of his inability to defend  
 hearth and home, and undertook to raise a national  
 militia which, without doing violence to prejudices  
 against a standing army, should provide a ready and  
 reputable means of self-defence. He took a more  
 courageous step. He gave instructions that a couple  
 of battalions of Highlanders should be formed for  
 Imperial service. It would be interesting to know  
 with whom originated the idea of turning the gallant  
 Scots so recently England's bitter enemies, into  
 British soldiers. Duncan Forbes of Culloden some  
 years before the '45, urged Walpole to make the  
 experiment;<sup>1</sup> Wolfe we know proposed it in his  
 letter to Rickson in 1751; the plan was laid before  
 Pitt by Lord Albemarle, Wolfe's late colonel, who  
 received it from the Duke of Cumberland;<sup>2</sup> not  
 • impossibly, therefore, its authorship might be traced  
 to Wolfe himself, as Wright believes. The impor-  
 tance of the departure, the very greatness of the idea,  
 is emphasised by the disapproval of the Duke of  
 Newcastle, Pitt's nominal chief. To crown all in this  
 scheme for creating loyal soldiers out of broken

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Wrong: *A Canadian Manor and its Seigneurs*,  
 p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Almon: *Anecdotes of the Earl of Chatham*, 3rd Ed.,  
 vol. i, p. 299.

enemies, Simon Fraser, Master of Lovat, the son of the Simon Fraser whose treachery cost him his head, was entrusted with the raising of a regiment. The timorous quaked ; the over-cautious shook their heads ; and the experiment was soon to prove that neither fear nor prejudice but downright solid conviction, directed to an end which is as a fixed target, provides the pillars of success.

A series of  
misfor-  
tunes.

When Pitt said there was only one man who could save England and that man was himself he made no idle boast ; he gauged his own powers as surely as he gauged the powers of others. In his efforts to work with the men immediately available he failed to accomplish much. If 1756 was a demoralising year, 1757 would have taken the country to still lower depths but for the superb qualities of endurance of this one man. From every quarter save one came the same story : incompetence, inertia, defeat. Clive alone struck home, and at Plassey laid deep the foundations of British Empire in the East. Elsewhere British enterprise miscarried. The Duke of Cumberland was defeated by the French at Klosterzeven ; the French in America under Montcalm captured Fort William Henry and added a shocking chapter to the story of the struggle for empire in which the savage has taken part ; Lord Loudon and Admiral Holborne set out bravely to recapture Louisbourg, and were so impressed with its formidable works and the fleet in its splendid harbour that they retired without firing a shot, and an expedition sent under Admiral Hawke and Sir John Mordaunt to harry the French coast returned with one feeble fort to its account instead of a record of Rochefort and Havre and other places laid under heavy contribution.

Who but Pitt could have withstood such a series of harassing and contemptible failures ?

Wolfe was with the abortive Rochefort expedition, and it happens that it serves as a fine example alike of the methods then thought adequate to the maintenance of Britain's naval and military reputation, of the manner in which Wolfe stood out from the general rut, and of the sure instinct with which Pitt discovered the men who could execute his high commands. The expedition was to be a joint naval and military affair ; Sir John Mordaunt, by the King's wish, was placed at the head of ten thousand men who were assembled on the Isle of Wight ; the Hon. H. S. Conway and Cornwallis were respectively second and third in command, and Wolfe, who was appointed Quartermaster-General, came fourth. Horace Walpole, who was Conway's relative and great admirer, said of Wolfe on this occasion, " The world could not expect more from him than he thought himself capable of performing. He looked upon danger as the favourable moment that would call forth his talents." Walpole was more correct in that judgment than in a good many. If Pitt proclaimed himself the one man to save the country, Wolfe conceivably would have advanced the rider " And I am the one man who can be trusted to carry out your orders." However, Wolfe was quite happy : there was fighting to be done and he was to be with his old friend Mordaunt. The troops were ready long before the transports. Instead of sailing in August they did not get off till the 8th of September, owing to the misconduct of certain contractors. No one knew the destination of the force until it was at sea. When Hawke opened his sealed orders he

The  
Rochefort  
expedition.

found that he was to make for Rochefort. Information had reached Pitt through a Captain Clark who had recently been travelling on the west coast of France that Rochefort was so ill-prepared for defence that it might be taken by a *coup de main*.

Mordaunt's  
instruc-  
tions.

Pitt saw here an opportunity for creating a diversion in the interests of Prussia at the same time that he did something to cripple the naval position of France. Sir John Mordaunt's instructions were to assist the vigorous prosecution of this "just war" by an attack on the French coast, it being expedient and of urgent necessity to cause a diversion and disturb the credit of the enemy in Europe. The Government were persuaded that nothing could more speedily and effectually annoy and distress France than the destruction of docks, shipping, magazines, and arsenals. After Rochefort, if the condition of the fleet permitted, Sir John Mordaunt was to turn his attention to other places with as much rapidity as possible in order to create "a warm alarm along the maritime provinces of France." There was every prospect of five or six weeks' sharp work here, but unfortunately the instructions also provided for the holding of councils of war, and councils of war invariably mean resolutions embodying cumulative caution rather than cumulative courage. The expedition speedily became a farce, and a very melancholy farce for poor Wolfe. In the Bay of Biscay he suffered tortures. Arrived off the Isle of Oleron on the 20th September, the expedition spent two days in futility before Captain Howe in the *Magnanime* attacked a fort on the Isle of Aix, which he reduced with an ease that should have been an encouragement to other captains. The force which took possession

of the island behaved disgracefully, to Wolfe's infinite disgust. The English, knowing little how to win battles, seemed to have forgotten how to behave in the hour of victory, however insignificant that victory might be.

On the 23rd Hawke sent out a reconnoitring party up the river with a view to a landing and two more days were lost. Wolfe himself, by special permission of his chief, had already examined the position and made a report on which both Hawke and Mordaunt were prepared to act. But Conway had been interviewing certain prisoners, and their not wholly disinterested representations were not in accord with Wolfe's ideas. The attempt would be full of hazard, and a council of war, at which Wolfe, of course, was not present, declared the project to be impracticable and inadvisable if practicable. Part of a naval force sent to bombard Rochefort got aground with some bomb-ketches, and when events lent colour to Conway's view, it was suddenly decided to act on Wolfe's. Troops were ordered to be in readiness to land, and another council of war decided that they should attempt the "impracticable" and the "inadvisable." On the 28th the landing was to take place after dark; the men were crowded into boats which were tossed about for hours whilst waiting for the order to go, and at last the order came—to return to the ships!

If this were not well-attested history it would be incredible. Hawke grew impatient, refused to attend any more councils of war, and the whole force returned to England less than a month after it started, having done nothing. It is pretty certain that it might have done everything required of it if there had been

**Councils of war.**

**Wolfe's severe criticism.**



any enterprise on the part of Mordaunt, Conway or Cornwallis, and we know from French memoirs of the time with what apprehension even the smallest success was anticipated. The historian who fixes his attention on the military side only says that on the whole the troops were sent on a fool's errand, that Pitt was solely to blame, and that "military opinion was against the expedition from the first."<sup>1</sup> The utter inability of the great bulk of contemporary military opinion to rise to the level of Pitt's conception of the strategic needs of an empire based on the sea could not be more concisely stated. Wolfe took a very different view both as to the military operations themselves and the nature of the errand.<sup>2</sup> He told his mother that he was ashamed to have been of the party. "The public could not do better than dismiss some six or eight of us from the service: no zeal, no ardour, no care or concern for the good and honour of the country." To his uncle Walter he wrote a full and particular account of the affair in which he described how "the lucky moment in war" was lost beyond recovery—

" '*Nous avons manqué un beau coup,*' as the French prisoners told us, after we had loitered away three or four days in consultations, deliberations, and councils of war. The season of the year and nature of the enterprise called for the quickest and most vigorous execution, whereas our proceedings were quite otherwise. We were in sight of the Isle of Rhé the 20th September, consequently were seen by the enemy (as their signals left us no room to doubt), and it was the 23rd before we fired a gun. That afternoon and night slipped through our hands,—the lucky moment of confusion and consternation among our enemies. The 24th, Admirals

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue: *History of the British Army*, vol. ii, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Chesterfield to his son: "Your friend Colonel Wolfe publicly offered to do the business with 500 men and three ships only." *Correspondence of Chatham*, vol. i, p. 279.



and Generals consult together, and resolve upon nothing between them but to hold a council of war. The 25th, this famous council sat from morning till late at night, and the result of the debates was unanimously not to attack the place they were ordered to attack, and for reasons that no soldier will allow to be sufficient. The 26th,—the Admiral sends a message to the General, intimating that if they did not determine to do something there he would go to another place. The 27th,—the Generals and Admiral view the land with glasses, and agree upon a second council of war, having by this time discovered their mistake. The 28th,—they deliberate, and resolve to land that night. Orders are issued out accordingly, but the wind springing up after the troops had been two or three hours in the boats, the officers of the navy declare it difficult and dangerous to attempt the landing. The troops are commanded back to their transports, and so ended the expedition! The true state of the case is, that our sea-officers do not care to be engaged in any business of this sort, where little is to be had but blows and reputation; and the officers of the infantry are so profoundly ignorant, that an enterprise of any vigour astonishes them to that degree that they have not strength of mind nor confidence to carry it through.

“ I look upon this as the greatest design that the nation has engaged in for many years, and it must have done honour to us all if the execution had answered the intentions of the projector. The Court of Versailles, and the whole French nation, were alarmed beyond measure. ‘ *Les Anglais ont attrapé notre foible,*’ disent-ils. Alas! we have only discovered our own. I see no remedy, for we have no officers from the commander-in-chief down to Mr. Webb and Lord Howe; and the navy list is not much better. If they would even blunder on and fight a little, making some amends to the public by their courage for their want of skill; but this excessive degree of caution, or whatever name it deserves, leaves exceeding bad impressions among the troops, who, to do them justice, upon this occasion showed all the signs of spirit and goodwill.”

The officers  
responsible

This last opinion notwithstanding, he could not forget the shameful exhibition on the Isle of Aix. Caustic at the expense of the egregious blunderers “ on both sides—sea and land,” and ready to recognise the desire for employment of common soldier

and common sailor alike, Wolfe, writing to his father, expressed the hope that "these disappointments won't affect their courage; nothing I think can affect their discipline—it is at its worst. They shall drink and swear, plunder and massacre with any troops in Europe, the Cossacks and Calmucks themselves not excepted; with this difference that they have not quite so violent an appetite for blood and bonfires."

Wolfe's  
"golden  
utterance,"

For Rickson's benefit he elaborated a series of axioms, which show how he endeavoured to turn even failure to account. Mr. Corbett describes this letter as a "priceless document." Amidst so much recrimination there stands out this "one golden utterance" from the pen of Wolfe, who gathered from the failure "all the lessons it could teach, laid them quietly to his heart, and wove from them to his lasting honour the reputation of being the greatest master of combined warfare the world had seen since Drake took the art from its swaddling clothes."<sup>1</sup> Here is the letter—

"One may always pick up something useful from amongst the most fatal errors. I have found out that an Admiral should endeavour to run into an enemy's port immediately after he appears before it; that he should anchor the transport-ships and frigates as close as he can to the land; that he should reconnoitre and observe it as quick as possible, and lose no time in getting the troops on shore; that previous directions should be given in respect to landing the troops, and a proper disposition made for the boats of all sorts, appointing leaders and fit persons for conducting the different divisions. On the other hand, experience shows me that, in an affair depending upon vigour and dispatch, the Generals should settle their plan of operations, so that no time may be lost in idle debate and consultations when the sword should be drawn; that pushing on smartly is the road to success, and more particularly so in an affair of this nature; that nothing is to be reckoned an obstacle to your undertaking which is

<sup>1</sup> *England in the Seven Years' War*, vol. i, p. 221.

not found really so upon trial ; that in war something must be allowed to chance and fortune, seeing it is in its nature hazardous, and an option of difficulties ; that the greatness of an object should come under consideration, opposed to the impediments that lie in the way ; that the honour of one's country is to have some weight ; and that, in particular circumstances and times, the loss of a thousand men is rather an advantage to a nation than otherwise, seeing that gallant attempts raise its reputation and make it respectable ; whereas the contrary appearances sink the credit of a country, ruin the troops, and create infinite uneasiness and discontent at home.

" I know not what to say, my dear Rickson, or how to account for our proceedings, unless I own to you that there never was people collected together so unfit for the business they were sent upon—dilatory, ignorant, irresolute, and some grains of a very unmanly quality, and very unsoldier-like or unsailor-like. I have already been too imprudent ; I have said too much, and people make me say ten times more than I ever uttered ; therefore, repeat nothing out of my letter, nor name my name as author of any one thing. The whole affair turned upon the impracticability of escalading Rochefort ; and the two evidences brought to prove that the ditch was wet (in opposition to the assertions of the chief engineer, who had been in the place), are persons to whom, in my mind, very little credit should be given ; without these evidences we should have landed, and must have marched to Rochefort, and it is my opinion that the place would have surrendered, or have been taken, in forty-eight hours. It is certain that there was nothing in all that country to oppose 9,000 good Foot,—a million of Protestants, upon whom it is necessary to keep a strict eye, so that the garrison could not venture to assemble against us, and no troops, except the militia, within any moderate distance of these parts. Little practice in war, ease and convenience at home, great incomes, and no wants, with no ambition ~~to~~ stir to action, are not the instruments to work a successful war withal ; I see no prospect of better deeds. I know not where to look for them, or from whom we may expect them. Many handsome things would have been done by the troops had they been permitted to act."

**The wrong instruments.**

Quite in keeping with the spirit of the proceedings before Rochefort, each of the two services impartially attempted to fix responsibility on the other. An

**Fixing responsibility.**

official inquiry before which Wolfe had to appear wrung from him the comment: "Better and more honourable for the country if one half of us had gone the road of mortality together than to be plagued with inquiries and censures and the cry of the world." The officers who held the inquiry decided that if Wolfe's plan had been adopted "it must certainly have been of the greatest utility" towards the attainment of the object in view. General Mordaunt was then tried by court-martial; no special blame was attached to anyone, "so that this grand expedition miscarried without a cause"<sup>1</sup>—a fittingly illogical conclusion to the whole business. "And there," to quote Wolfe's own words, which he described as "insolent," "ended the reputation of three bad generals." Two people at least kept Wolfe's record at this time in mind: one was Horace Walpole, who hated him for the reflections his evidence had cast on Conway, the other was Pitt. To make assurance doubly sure no less a person than Admiral Hawke drew attention to Wolfe's conduct. Within a fortnight of his return to England Wolfe heard that the King had been pleased to give him the rank of colonel. Only four days previously he had announced his surrender of the Irish appointment, but in response to representations from influential quarters he held his hand, though he persisted that he would not go to Ireland in any case without his colonelcy. Now that he had got the step he wanted—a step he prized all the more because it followed on the Rochefort fiasco—he was not to take up the Irish post. He soon learned that he was wanted

<sup>1</sup> John Campbell: *Naval History of Great Britain*, vol. iv, p. 373.

elsewhere, and for a bigger if less remunerative enterprise.

Pitt was spurred to greater efforts than ever by the mishaps of the past year. It was not his habit to bring new mischiefs on by mourning those that were past and gone. His plans grew bigger as the rebuffs multiplied, and he faced his country's enemies in exactly the same spirit that he had faced his personal enemies in Parliament for so many years. He set himself now not merely to defeat the French, but on and beyond the seas to break them altogether. In America they were making steady headway. They must be driven out and never again be allowed to enter. His plan of campaign was triple in character. He would send three expeditions, one to take Fort Duquesne, one to Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and one to Louisbourg, the three working up to the grand finale at Quebec. He recalled Loudon and appointed Abercromby, who proved to be no better than Loudon, to the command of his Majesty's forces in America, giving him as brigadier Lord Howe, one of the best officers in the army, from whom Wolfe expected "handsome performances." If Howe had been appointed to command the Ticonderoga expedition instead of Abercromby the initial performance would have been very different. As it was, Abercromby suffered a serious reverse, and Lord Howe, "a complete model of military virtue in all its branches," as Pitt said, was sacrificed. Pitt had not yet weeded out all the incompetents in command. For the Duquesne expedition he selected Forbes, a young officer whose abilities were in inverse ratio to his health, and ill as he was, Forbes drove the French from the fort after a most arduous expedition.

Pitt's  
plans.

Preparing  
for  
Louisbourg.

The attack on Louisbourg, the big job of the three, was to be led by Lord Amherst, whom Pitt summoned from Germany. With Amherst, Wolfe was to go as brigadier. In the command of the fleet which was to co-operate, was placed Admiral the Hon. Edward Boscawen. Preparations were hurried forward, and Wolfe in Exeter, on January 7th, 1758, received a letter which brought him to town post-haste. Riding through the night, he accomplished the distance, 170 miles, in twenty hours. For the next fortnight he was busy fixing up his personal and professional affairs, and by the end of the month he expected to be at sea. How he looked forward to the time when possibly he might be able to take a voyage without enduring inexpressible pain—pain which was not lessened by the consciousness that dignity and sea-sickness are incompatible. During the interval in London, he made Blackheath his head-quarters; his parents, whose health occasioned him much concern, were at Bath, and there was no cheery send-off. His letters do not, however, suggest that he was very miserable. Work is misery's antidote, and Wolfe had plenty to do. Two references in his correspondence with his mother have some bearing on his ideas as to his future: one is to the youngest of his mother's neighbours at Bath, probably the Miss Lowther who was to take the place of Miss Lawson in his heart; the other, dated the 25th January, is this: "Of late, no thought of matrimony; I have no objection to it but differ much from the general opinion about it. The greatest consideration with me is the woman, her education and temper. Rank and fortune never come into any competition with the

person. Any bargain on that affair is base and mean. I could not with any satisfaction consider my children as the produce of such an unnatural union."

Wolfe left for Portsmouth on the 1st February, and was impatient as usual to be off. On the 11th he wrote to his mother: "Delays are not only productive of bad consequences, but are very tiresome and very inconvenient, as every unhappy person whose lot is to be confined for any time to this place can certify. The want of company and of amusement can be supplied with books and exercise, but the necessity of living in the midst of the diabolical citizens of Portsmouth is a real and unavoidable calamity. It is a doubt to me if there is such another collection of demons upon the whole earth. Vice, however, wears so ugly a garb that it disgusts rather than tempts." Wolfe was not sparing in his criticisms of the places in which he found himself. On the 12th he went on board the *Princess Amelia*; three days later he was at sea, and by the 22nd he was off Plymouth Sound in such bad weather that one important vessel was wrecked on a sandbank. It was six weeks before the fleet reached Halifax. "From Christopher Columbus' time to our days there perhaps has never been a more extraordinary voyage. The continual opposition of contrary winds, calms or currents baffled all our skill and wore out all our patience."<sup>1</sup> What a place Halifax must have been to Brigadier James Wolfe: full of activity and excitement, with ships and troops gathered from

Portsmouth  
in 1757.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lord George Sackville: *His. MSS. Com.*, IX, iii, p. 74. Von Ruville (vol. ii, p. 257) mistakes this voyage of 1758 for that of 1759.



many parts in readiness for the grand *coup* to be delivered at Louisbourg.

Wolfe's  
"amphi-  
bious  
scheme."

Admiral Boscawen was indefatigable on the naval side, and the army only awaited the arrival of General Amherst. In conformity with instructions from Pitt, Boscawen and Governor Lawrence in the interval proceeded to devise a plan for the reduction of the fortress. The plan adopted was probably Wolfe's: "it was elaborate and strongly redolent of his theory of combined operations," says Mr. Corbett.<sup>1</sup> "The general idea, as always with him, was based on the advantage of their amphibious flexibility. Wolfe, with three battalions of his favourite Light Infantry, was to land in Miré Bay, about ten miles to the north of Louisbourg, and to march thence towards Gabarus Bay with the intention presumably of taking in reverse the landing-place at Cormorant Cove which the French had now strongly entrenched." Monckton was to descend on a cove between Louisbourg and Miré Bay, Boscawen with his fleet was to demonstrate at the mouth of the harbour, and a third force was to slip ashore at Gabarus Bay beyond the French works. "Nothing," wrote Wolfe to Lord Sackville on May 24th, "is yet fixed nor will be till we see the object [objective], and perhaps General Amherst may arrive in the meanwhile, time enough to improve the present plan."<sup>2</sup> Amherst did arrive in time. He sighted Halifax on the 28th, the very day that Boscawen put to sea, and Wolfe's plan did not commend itself to him. "We can well believe that the division of force which it entailed and which was always the essence of Wolfe's conduct of amphibious operations was rank

<sup>1</sup> *England in the Seven Years' War*, vol. i, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> *His. MSS. Com.* IX, iii, p. 75.



heresy to a Continental strategist.”<sup>1</sup> The very spirit of originality in Wolfe’s scheme was enough to give Amherst pause. There was none better than Amherst on conventional lines, and there was none less likely to adhere to conventional lines than Wolfe.

<sup>1</sup> *England in the Seven Years’ War*, vol. i, p. 321.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SIEGE OF LOUISBOURG

**Louisbourg.** By the 1st June the fleet was in Gabarus Bay ; on the 2nd a fog which had enveloped the fortress, the Dunkirk of America, lifted as though to give the British an idea of the task before them. What Wolfe felt when he first caught sight of Louisbourg, what Amherst and Boscawen felt, can only be matter of conjecture. Situated on the south east of the Isle of Cape Breton, provided by nature with defences which the science of the French engineers had done its best to make impregnable, it had long been recognised by American Governors, as well as French and English Governments, as the key to New Canada's main entrance. Known by the French before the Treaty of Utrecht as Havre à l'Anglais and by the English as English Harbour, directly that Treaty was signed France took possession. What she had hitherto done from the banks of Newfoundland she now intended to do from the fine harbour of Louisbourg. It served the purpose of empire and of commerce ; it was a naval base, at once a protection to the St. Lawrence and a refuge for her fleets against superior British forces and the storms of the Atlantic ; it was a first-rate point from which to attack the English colonies on the Atlantic front, and it became the centre of the French fishing industry. To New England, Louisbourg was an ever-present source of annoyance ; that the men of Massachusetts had managed to take possession of it must have given

Amherst and Wolfe cause for thought; that the place once secured should have been given up on any consideration must have made them marvel at the genius of statesmanship for throwing away what the soldier and sailor had won. In the ten troubled years that had elapsed since the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle no effort had been spared to make it impossible Louisbourg should ever again be captured. The town was built on the tongue of land to the west of the harbour's mouth: on the seaward side frowning cliffs and a rock-bound shore cast defiance at stressful billow and determined invader: on the land side formidable works stood between a marsh and the town, and for miles the shore was commanded by masked batteries. In the centre of the harbour mouth was an island<sup>1</sup> well fortified, on the opposite point where the lighthouse stood were more defences, and across the harbour, on the north side, were the Grand Battery and other works. Louisbourg at this time was in charge of Governor Drucour; its population was some 2,000, and he had with him 2,500 regular troops, 600 burghers and Canadians, and some 3,000 sailors belonging to a fleet of seven ships of the line, and five frigates which lay in the harbour.<sup>2</sup> Amherst's force, composed largely of picked bodies of troops

Formidable  
defences.

<sup>1</sup> This island is variously spoken of as Battery Island and Goat Island. Parkman calls it Goat Island both in his text and on his map. Mr. Bradley speaks of it as Goat Island, but his map (*The Fight with France for North America*) shows Goat Island not to be Battery Island at all. Sir John Bourinot also calls Battery Island Goat Island, but his map (*Cape Breton and its Memorials*) seems to make it clear that Battery Island and Goat Island were distinct places.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Mahan (*The Influence of Sea Power on History*, p. 293) says there were only five ships in the harbour—obviously a mistake. Bourinot (*Cape Breton*, p. 73) accounts for fourteen, of which two got clear away.

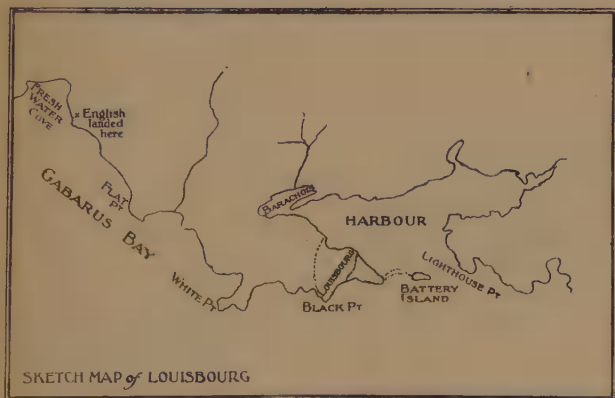
from many regiments and from the volunteers of New England, was 12,000 strong; Boscawen's fleet consisted of thirty-nine battleships, 118 transports, two fire ships—a magnificent Armada, an earnest of Pitt's resolve to give France no chance now of successfully disputing with Great Britain the Empire of the West.

The  
landing.

The first thing to be done was to reconnoitre; late on the afternoon of the 2nd of June when the fleet was safely anchored in Gabarus Bay, Amherst, with Wolfe and Lawrence and other officers, got into the boats and made as minute a study of the shore as a rough sea, the treacherous rocks and the vigilance of the French posted behind concealed guns would allow. From Freshwater Cove away on the west past Flat Point and White Point to Black Point near the town, they found, said Wolfe, "some works thrown up at the places which appeared practicable to land at, and some batteries."<sup>1</sup> But Amherst took his decision. He would endeavour to effect a landing on the left, that is, at Freshwater Cove, some four miles from the town, whilst making a pretence at landing at other points nearer. Everything was made ready for the morrow. The weather was, however, unfavourable. For three days wind and surf alternated with fog and swell, and the Admiral had reluctantly to confess that he could not land the troops. There was talk of a Council of War, but that discredited expedient was happily not resorted to. On the 6th of June the weather moderated; the boats were promptly got out, and the men ordered into them, but the fog and swell returned before they were ready to put off, and Amherst had to order them

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. i, p. 271.

to return to the ships, "first acquainting them with the reason for so doing," he says significantly. Wolfe could not have failed to remember Rochefort, and Amherst was not inclined to allow his officers and men to think for a moment that similar demoralising influences were at work now. All the same, we know enough of Wolfe by this time to be sure that he was



not taking this delay with absolute resignation—a delay which everyone was aware the enemy would turn to the best possible account. Once more on the 7th there was promise, this time not to be disappointed, of a change for the better. A number of sloops were sent off to the other side of the harbour entrance, and early on the following morning three divisions were ready in the boats for the landing. At three points, frigates opened a sharp cannonade as though they were covering the landing parties, and

to the roar of guns—music in the ears of men embarked on a life and death struggle—hundreds of boats were pulled with all the vigour which the British bluejacket could put into the work, towards the shore. In his graphically simple, soldier-like way, Amherst reports<sup>1</sup>—

Amherst's  
report.

“When the fire had continued about a Quarter of an Hour, the Boats upon the left rowed into the Shore under the Command of Br. General Wolfe, whose Detachment was composed of the four eldest Companys of Grenadiers, followed by the Light Infantry, (a Corps of 550 Men chosen as Marksmen from the different Regiments to serve as Irregulars, and are commanded by Major Scott, who was Major of brigade),<sup>(2)</sup> and Companys of Rangers, supported by the Highland Regiment, and then by the Eight remaining Companys of Grenadiers.

“The Division on the right under the Command of Br. General Whitmore consisted of the Royal, Lascelles, Monckton, Forbes, Anstruther, and Webb, and rowed to our right by the White Point as if intending to force a landing there. The center Division under the Command of Br. General Lawrence was formed of Amherst's, Hopson's, Otway's, Whitmore's, Lawrence's, and Warburton's, and made at the same time a shew of landing at the fresh-water Cove :<sup>(3)</sup> this drew the Enemy's attention to every part and

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. i, pp. 273-4.

<sup>(2)</sup> The Light Infantry, specially dressed and armed, were an idea of Wolfe's. The smartness of their movements induced an officer to say that they reminded him of the Carduchi who harassed Xenophon in his retreat over the mountains. “You are right,” said Wolfe, “I had it thence ; but our friends are astonished at what I have shown them because they have read nothing.”—(Wright, p. 442 : quoted from James's *Military Dictionary*.)

<sup>(3)</sup> As Parkman's map (*Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii) shows Freshwater Cove to be on the extreme left where Wolfe landed and as Bourinot (*Cape Breton and its Memorials*, p. 70) says Wolfe made the real attack there, Amherst possibly meant to write Flat Point Cove, which would be the centre. Mr. Doughty speaks of Lawrence at Freshwater Cove (vol. i, p. 104). This is only another geographical discrepancy defying settlement.

prevented their troops posted along the Coast from joining those on their Right.

"The Enemy acted very wisely, did not throw away a Shot till the Boats were near in Shore, and then directed the whole Fire of their Cannon and Musketry upon them; the Surf was so great, that a place could hardly be found to get a boat on shore; notwithstanding the fire of the Enemy, and the violence of the surf, Brigadier Wolfe pursued his point and landed just at the left of the cove,<sup>(1)</sup> took post, attacked the Enemy and forced them to retreat. Many Boats overset, several broke to Pieces, and all the Men jumped into the Water to get on shore.

"As soon as the left Division was landed, the first Detachments of the center rowed at a proper time to the left and followed, then the remainder of the Center division as fast as the boats could fetch them from the Ships and the right Division followed the Center in like Manner.

"It took up a great deal of time to land the Troops, the Enemy's Retreat, or rather Flight, was through the roughest and worst Ground I ever saw, and the Pursuit ended with a Cannonading from the town which was so far of use, that it pointed out how near I could encamp to invest it; on which the Regiments marched to their ground and lay on their Arms, the wind encreased, and we could not get any thing on shore."

From other sources we get more detail of the event. Wolfe leading the left got near the shore only to be received with so hot a fire that he speedily came to the conclusion no man could scramble through the surf and up the rocks with a chance of living. He ordered that the signal to stand away from the shore should be hoisted, but the mast which carried it was instantly smashed by a shot. At that moment he saw that a couple of other boats in charge of subalterns had found protection behind a projecting rock, and that men were actually leaping into the surf. In an instant he was with them followed by his Grenadiers,

The first battery.

<sup>(1)</sup> The spot where Wolfe landed is known to-day as Wolfe's Rock (Ochiltree Macdonald : *Last Siege of Louisbourg*, p. 169).

his Highlanders, and his Light Infantry.<sup>1</sup> Cane in hand—not sword, as the would-be laureate<sup>2</sup> of the siege says—he had no time to think of boats smashed, of luckless men swept away; he rapidly formed up those who were with him, and in the teeth of the enemy's fire charged for the first battery. Not a man should have lived to tell the story if the guns had been properly served. Wolfe, when he came to review events quietly, was convinced that the cost to the British should have been heavy even though the affair had not ended in irretrievable disaster. "An officer and thirty men," he told Rickson later, "would [he meant should] have made it impossible to get ashore where we did."

Montcalm, when he heard of it, was amazed that the British had succeeded in gaining a footing on what had hitherto been regarded as an inaccessible coast for military purposes. How was it, he asked, that troops charged with the defence of the entrenchments at this point, did not march after the first discharge of artillery and musketry, with bayonets fixed, upon the English whom they should have destroyed.<sup>3</sup> One answer is that the bravest defenders are apt to lose heart when the attack does the

<sup>1</sup> An eye-witness quoted by Mr. Ochiltree Macdonald (*The Last Siege of Louisbourg*, p. 167) said the French fire was so severe the men quailed before it. Wolfe and Lawrence leapt ashore, crying "Follow me, my boys: this is for England's glory," and the example inspired the troops. Lawrence was not with Wolfe at the moment of landing. The situation is sufficiently dramatic to lose by melodramatic imaginings.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ochiltree Macdonald, whose little book contains some shocking doggerel and much that is curious about Louisbourg.

<sup>3</sup> Casgrain: *Journal du Marquis de Montcalm*, p. 383.



seemingly impossible. Whatever the explanation the French, or as some say, the *Volontaires Etrangers*, a contingent of German mercenaries, did not care to risk cold steel; they were fearful of being cut off, and the movements to the centre and right did as much perhaps to win the day as Wolfe's and his companions' daring. Wolfe was in possession of the abandoned battery when Amherst and the other Brigadiers joined him. The enemy abandoned seventeen guns, four mortars, four swivells, with ammunition, tools, stores, food, wine, brandy—all of which were of immediate use. Meanwhile the pursuit was hot. It was only stayed when the guns on Louisbourg's bastions warned the British that advantage had been pushed to its limits. The panic spread round the harbour. Every outpost was abandoned. Whilst the British were making themselves secure, the French outside the fortress destroyed their works, spiked their guns, and retreated as fast as boats and legs could carry them. Even the fleet soon had reason to wish itself anywhere but in the harbour. The Admiral, days before, would have taken it to the comparative safety of the high seas, but Governor Drucour, who had an idea that it might be of material assistance to the defence, objected. He and the Admiral were both right. The fleet was in a trap, but so long as it lasted it was of great service.

Amherst's operations for some days were impeded by bad weather, which prevented the landing of siege guns and other heavy material. Boscawen reported that he lost no fewer than 100 boats in thirteen days between the fleet and the shore. But Amherst did not waste his time. He familiarised himself with the ground, he reconnoitred “places from which he

At Light-  
house  
Point.

could most sensibly insult the enemy's works,"<sup>1</sup> he built redoubts, and threw up earthworks. The first important decision was to send Wolfe with 1,200 men to take possession of Lighthouse Point as the most convenient position from which to attempt the destruction of the men of war and to silence the island battery. The distance round the harbour was some seven or eight miles, and to get to Lighthouse Point Wolfe had to lead his detachment through ambuscades of lurking Indians.<sup>2</sup> They could not have been in great force or he would not have reached the point unmolested, as he did. Wolfe found Lighthouse Point abandoned, but commanded by the island battery. From the north-east corner of the harbour to the Lighthouse he established entrenched posts and batteries; he worked away with spade and pickaxe till his parties were able to inflict the maximum amount of damage with the minimum of risk to themselves. To get near enough to the point to silence the island battery without heavy loss to his own men was the problem Wolfe set himself to solve. His conduct on this occasion stamped him for the intrepid, cautious, and skilful leader he was. His disposition of and care for his men, his precautions against surprise either from the French garrison and fleet, or the Canadians and the Indians who were prepared to pounce upon him from the hills and woods, his elaborate instructions for the guidance of the officers in charge of the batteries, his concern for the efficiency and vigilance of the various working parties, enabled him to say to Amherst by

<sup>1</sup> Knox: *Historical Journal of the Campaign in North America*.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, p. 168.

the 19th: "My posts are now so fortified, I can afford you two companies of Yankees, and the more as they are better for ranging and scouting than either work or vigilance." Wolfe at times used strong language about the American irregular.<sup>1</sup> He may have shared some of the costly prejudices of Imperial officers like Braddock, but he was too enterprising and progressive a soldier himself to have retained the prejudice when experience proved it misplaced. "Are you not surprised," he continued, "to find that I have a battery here?" that is in the north-east harbour. "The ground upon which I propose to erect a formidable battery against island battery is so much exposed that I must wait for a dark night or a fog to get it up." He believed the French ships were in "a confounded scrape; that is if our bombardiers are worth a farthing." The conditions he desired came that night, for by the 20th he had advanced his principal battery sufficiently to begin pummelling away at the island. The ships fired away at Wolfe's batteries on shore; the batteries kept up a duel with the ships and the island; and Amherst's main body and the defenders worked their guns incessantly. On the 25th the island battery was silenced and Wolfe, leaving a sufficient contingent to man Lighthouse Point and prevent the restoration of the demolished battery, returned to his chief.

Amherst was making steady, if laborious, progress. The British lines were being gradually pushed nearer the fatal city. Redoubts, epaulement, roads, trenches, had to be made through country swept not only by the guns of the fortress, but by those of a ship in the harbour. The *Aréthuse* had pluckily taken up a

Wolfe's  
energy.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Sackville, *His. MSS. Com.* IX, iii. p. 77.

position in the western corner known as the Barachois, and was able to rake the British lines in a way which made her fire more troublesome than that of the fortress itself. Wolfe's return had the effect of putting more spirit into the safe and somewhat stolid movements of the besiegers. Of course, Amherst's difficulties were great, and in a letter to Pitt he said that his approach had not been as rapid as he could wish owing to the necessity of landing everything in "an almost continual surf, the making of roads, draining and passing of bogs and putting ourselves under cover." But for Wolfe difficulties existed to be overcome and if possible transferred to the enemy. The Brigadier was everywhere, now superintending the erection of a battery, which was to make the Barachois untenable for the *Aréthuse*, at the same time that it cleared the way to the West Gate of the City; now directing the works away to the far right. He did so much that there is perhaps a tendency to give him credit for more than he actually accomplished. What is certain is that the enemy never knew from evening to morning where a fresh battery would spring up in order to enable the main army to "carry on their approaches with the greater security and more expedition. Some People of the Garrison, to express their Surprise at this and some other Instances of the Suddenness of Brigadier Wolfe's Motions from one Place to another, and their Sentiments of the Effect of his Operations, used to say—There is no Certainty where to find him—but, wherever he goes, he carries with him a Mortar in one Pocket and a 24-pounder in the other."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "A Spectator," quoted by Doughty: *Siege of Quebec*, vol. i, p. 117.

Such efforts told apace. The day after Wolfe silenced the island battery, the French in order to prevent Admiral Boscawen from entering the harbour, sank four of their battleships at the mouth. Getting desperate, the defenders made more than one sortie, and were repulsed after considerable loss on both sides. Wolfe's batteries made themselves more and more felt,<sup>1</sup> and a note of his to Amherst suggests that the French were beginning to complain. He wrote : " When the French are in a scrape they are ready to cry out in behalf of the human species : when fortune favours them none more bloody, more inhuman. Montcalm changed the very nature of war and has forced us in some measure to a deterring and dreadful vengeance." The allusion here of course is to such unhappy incidents as the massacre of the English after the surrender of Fort William Henry for which Montcalm must be held in part responsible. The French in Canada always had the horror of that day on their consciences and dreaded the vengeance British victory might bring with it. In the siege of Louisbourg chivalry and humanity went hand in hand with the stern arbitrament of shot and shell. Drucour offered Amherst the services of a skilled physician should he be in need of one ; Amherst acknowledged the courtesy by sending some pine apples from the West Indies for the acceptance of Madame Drucour, who was with her husband, and was the good angel of the hard-pressed garrison ; Madame made grateful return in the shape of a case of excellent wine.

Complaints  
and  
amenities.

Personal amenities only threw professional ardour on both sides into stronger relief. Daily the British

Disaster on  
disaster.

<sup>1</sup> Even the Ships' Logs bear witness to Wolfe's special energy.

pressed their advantages home. The *Aréthuse* was badly hit and left her moorings : that was an immense gain. She repaired her injuries and then escaped through the obstructions at the entrance of the harbour, intending to carry news of Louisbourg's plight to France. She enjoyed no better luck than another vessel which got away much earlier with the idea of making for Quebec. Both fell into the hands of British vessels which patrolled the seas wherever it might be expected the French would appear.<sup>1</sup> On the 21st July a bomb fell on *L'Entreprennant*, which carried seventy-four guns ; there was a big explosion, and the vessel burst into flames ; the flames spread to the *Capricieux* and the *Célèbre* (sixty-four guns each) and all three were burnt out.<sup>2</sup> Disaster followed disaster. A fire broke out in the citadel, and to prevent its being properly dealt with the besiegers pounded away at other points ; after the citadel the barracks, a structure mainly wooden which the New Englanders had erected during their occupation a dozen years earlier, were consumed in the same way. The French shooting became of the wildest, and old iron or any missile that could be hurled from the guns was used for shot. Wolfe's energy seemed to grow with the enemy's demoralisation. Writing from the "Trenches at Daybreak" on the 25th, he requested that he should be "indulged" with six hours' rest in order that he might serve in the trenches at night.

<sup>1</sup> Bourinot ( *Cape Breton*, p. 73) says the *Aréthuse* reached France and was taken subsequently whilst cruising in the Channel.

<sup>2</sup> Parkman, Bradley and Doughty say the explosion was on the *Célèbre*. Boscawen's report ( *Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. i, p. 308) shows that they have reversed the order of events.

That night of the 25-6th was to put the crowning touch to French troubles. Admiral Boscawen sent the boats of his squadron in two divisions under Captains Laforey and Balfour into the harbour to capture or burn the *Prudent*, seventy-four guns, and the *Bienfaisant*, sixty-four guns, the only ships remaining of the French fleet. It was "a particular gallant action," as Boscawen says. The sailors in the dark, which was intensified by fog, silently reached and surrounded the two warships, clambered up their sides almost before the alarm could be given, and after a few minutes of sharp work overwhelmed the crews in charge. As the *Prudent* was aground, she was set alight; the *Bienfaisant* was got safely away, and towed to the north-east harbour. A few hours later Boscawen was prepared to send his own battleships in. But it was unnecessary; the last big gun on the walls was silenced by Amherst just about this time, and the end was very near.

The white flag was hoisted and Drucour sent out to learn what terms would be granted if he capitulated. He asked that he might be accorded those given by the French to the English garrison of Minorca. Amherst and Boscawen decided without a second's hesitation that the garrison must surrender as prisoners of war; the surrender to be agreed upon within an hour, otherwise the city would be attacked on all sides. Drucour protested; the only answer he got was that he might accept the conditions or not as he chose, and he must now say Yes or No within half an hour. His brief response was that his final resolution remained unaltered; he would take the consequences of the attack. His messenger had barely left when the civil authorities intervened in

The capitulation,  
26th July,  
1758.



order to avert the horrors of an assault. The prayers of an intimidated people were that they might not, to satisfy military glory, "be delivered over to carnage and the rage of an unbridled soldiery, eager for plunder and impelled to deeds of horror by pretended resentment at what has formerly happened in Canada." How long these impassioned representations occupied, how it happened that they occurred simultaneously with the despatch of Drucour's defiant message, we need not inquire too curiously. Drucour listened to reason, and a second messenger was sent to bring back the first. As Parkman suggests, it is evident the first was in no hurry to deliver the momentous note, for he had scarcely got beyond the fortifications when he was overtaken. Within the half-hour the English terms had been accepted and by midnight the articles of capitulation involving the fate of the whole Island of Cape Breton and other places had been signed. The British took possession of Louisbourg on the 27th July. The first of the series of heavy blows which were to drive the Bourbon colours from Canada had been delivered, and in its delivery the hand that was to direct the decisive if not the final blow was at least as conspicuous as that of the General himself. The advantages of combined operations were fully borne in upon Wolfe by Louisbourg. "The Admiral and General," he wrote to Lord George Sackville, "have carried a public service with great harmony, industry and union. Mr. Boscawen is . . . . an excellent back hand at a siege."<sup>1</sup> As on Wolfe had devolved so much of the hard work of investment, so now he was called upon to see that order

<sup>1</sup> *His, MSS, Com, IX, iii, p. 76,*



was preserved so far as was possible after the trying ordeal to both sides of the past seven weeks. He posted sentinels on the ramparts whilst Brigadier Whitmore received the surrender of arms and colours on the esplanade from between five and six thousand men. In a note to his mother, the first he had written home since the siege began, Wolfe said he had been into Louisbourg to pay his "devoirs" to the ladies. They were pale and thin and had been heartily frightened but no real harm had befallen any. To his father he expressed a hope that "there will be fine weather enough for another blow"—he was thinking of Quebec—and to his uncle Walter he wrote at some length in the same characteristically critical spirit that marked his letter to Rickson.<sup>1</sup> The "attempt" to land was "rash and ill-advised" and succeeded only by "the greatest of good fortune imaginable." The operations, he said, were "slow and injudicious." The Indians he speaks of as "contemptible canaille—a dastardly set of bloody rascals. We cut them to pieces whenever we found them in return for a thousand acts of cruelty and barbarity. I do not penetrate our General's intentions. If he means to attack Quebec he must not lose a moment."

Barely was Louisbourg in British hands before news arrived which chastened the joy of the victors, and to some extent tempered the bitter reflections of the vanquished. Abercromby had been beaten at Ticonderoga by Montcalm, and among those whose lives had been sacrificed was the gallant young Howe, "the noblest Englishman that has appeared in my time," said Wolfe, "and the best soldier in the army."

Ticonde-  
roga.

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 112.

Heavens ! what a loss to the country : the bravest, worthiest, and most intelligent man among us." In the midst of getting off prisoners to England and disposing of the innumerable details which demanded his attention, Amherst had to decide what he would do next. How could he best help Abercromby ? Should he take ship at once to the south with reinforcements, or should he try to draw Montcalm off by an expedition up the River St. Lawrence in fulfilment of the original intention of the campaign ? He was deliberate as usual, much to Wolfe's annoyance. " We are gathering strawberries and other wild fruits of the country with a seeming indifference about what is doing in other parts of the world," he wrote impatiently on August 7th, and he pressed Amherst for some hint of his intentions. Amherst was undecided ; the Admiral and he were of opinion that they could not go to Quebec but must do something in General Abercromby's favour ; so they advertised for pilots to go up the St. Lawrence,<sup>1</sup> where they had little intention of even attempting to go. Wolfe wrote to Amherst on August 8th a letter which, to say the least, was not wanting in directness—

Wolfe to  
Amherst.

" All accounts agree that General Abercromby's army is cut deep, and all the last advices from those parts trace the bloody steps of those scoundrels, the Indians. As an Englishman, I cannot see these things without the utmost horror and concern. We all know how little the Americans are to be trusted ; by this time, perhaps, our troops are left to defend themselves, after losing the best of our officers. If the Admiral will not carry us to Quebec, reinforcements should certainly be sent to the continent without losing a moment's time. The companies of Rangers, and the Light Infantry, would be extremely useful at this juncture ; whereas here they are perfectly idle, and, like the rest, of no manner of service to the public. If Lawrence has any objection to

<sup>1</sup> Amherst (*Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. i, p. 313).

going I am ready to embark with four or five battalions, and will hasten to the assistance of our countrymen. I wish we were allowed to address the Admiral, or I wish you yourself, Sir, would do it in form. This d——d French garrison takes up our time and attention, which might be better bestowed upon the interesting affairs of the continent. The transports are ready, and a small convoy would carry a brigade to Boston or New York. With the rest of the troops we might make an offensive and a destructive war in the Bay of Fundy and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. I beg pardon for this freedom, but I cannot look coolly upon the bloody inroads of those hell-hounds the Canadians; and if nothing further is to be done, I must desire leave to quit the army."

General Amherst took this strong language in good part, explained that it was his original intention to go to Quebec, but that events now seemed to make it advisable to go to Abercromby, to send five or six battalions to the Bay of Fundy, and another force to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He invited Wolfe to propound any scheme which might assist matters. Such communication, he said, "will be of much more service than your thoughts of quitting the army which I can by no means agree to, as all my thoughts and wishes are confined at present to pursuing our operations for the good of his Majesty's service, and I know nothing that can tend more to it than your assisting in it." Wolfe soon learned that he was to command three regiments which were to be sent with a fleet under Sir Charles Hardy to Gaspé and other places in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to destroy French stores, drive out the settlers, and incidentally induce a belief that Quebec was to be attacked. Whilst preparing for the expedition, which Wolfe regarded with some contempt as one to "rob fishermen of their nets," he wrote a letter to his mother which gave her his view as to the character of the British possessions in America and the climate of "this fine

The future  
of America.

continent." He foreshadowed the time when it would be "a vast Empire, the seat of power and learning. Nature has refused them nothing, and there will grow a people out of our little spot England that will fill this vast space and divide this great portion of the globe with the Spaniards who are possessed of the other half." A little luck and the sparing of "that great man"—Lord Howe—"would have already laid the corner stone of this great fabric. It is my humble opinion that the French name would soon have been unknown in North America, and still may be rooted out if our Government will follow the blows they have given and prosecute the war with the vigour it requires."

A great  
deal of  
mischief.

The expedition to the Gulf of St. Lawrence set out on the 28th August; it anchored off Gaspé on the 5th September, and was back at Louisbourg again on the 29th. Wolfe reported to General Abercromby, to Pitt and to Amherst. His letter to Pitt<sup>1</sup> is an admirable summary of the operations conducted by the fleet and detachments of the army against the settlements at Gaspé, Baye de Chaleurs, and Miramichi. Wolfe was anxious to go much further than Sir Charles Hardy cared to take his fleet at that season. They captured a sloop with passengers from Quebec and learnt that great scarcity of provisions and distress prevailed in the city; "that (although the magazines for the army were full and the best harvest for many years) bread sold at a shilling a pound; that both the troops and the inhabitants had been reduced in the winter to eat horseflesh and that the colony must be ruined unless very early and very powerful assistance were given." Wolfe added

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence*, vol. i, p, 379,

that as the British found no enemy in a condition to oppose them they could add nothing to the reputation of His Majesty's arms. They had destroyed the fishery, "a material article of subsistence to the Canadians." He could not conceal his disgust. "All their houses, stages, magazines, shallops, nets, stores, and provisions are burnt, one hundred and forty of the inhabitants brought off, and the rest of these miserable people will in all probability be forced to abandon their settlements and retire to Quebec." Early next summer, he said, forty ships were expected in the River St. Lawrence with provisions, stores, etc. Having thus done "a great deal of mischief," as he said to Amherst, Wolfe took note of what was happening elsewhere.

Amherst had gone to Abercromby with 3,000 men, but Abercromby with four times that number already had done nothing beyond entrenching himself and quietly exchanging "his former rôle of an irresistible invader of Canada to that of the defender of a threatened frontier."<sup>1</sup> The solitary piece of news after Wolfe's own heart which had come to hand was of Bradstreet's daring seizure of Frontenac with a small force which he had induced Abercromby to give him. It was a master-stroke and commanded Wolfe's admiration. "An offensive daring kind of war," he told Amherst, "will awe the Indians and ruin the French. Blockhouses and a trembling defensive, encourage the meanest scoundrels to attack us. . . . If you will attempt to cut up New France by the roots I will come back with pleasure to assist." Meantime he was preparing to return to England apparently in the hope that he

To relieve  
Aber-  
cromby.

<sup>1</sup> *Fight with France for North America*, p. 261.

would be employed on the continent. To Lord George Sackville he said that he thought the English Ministry did not understand the value of the Isle of Aix. He undertook, if they would give him 4,000 men, a good quantity of artillery, fascines and sand-bags to establish himself so effectually that the French would exchange Minorca or anything to get him out.<sup>1</sup>

A mysterious letter of Wolfe's, written on the 6th June, 1759, and preserved in the Public Record Office, seems to throw some light on the personal side of affairs at this time. It is addressed to a peer whose identity is uncertain and runs—

“MY LORD,

“I have had the honour to receive two letters from your Lordship, one concerning my stay in this country to which I shall only say that the Marshal told me I was to return at the end of the Campaign, and as General Amherst had no other Commands than to send me to winter at Halifax under the orders of an officer [Governor Lawrence<sup>(2)</sup>], who was but a few months put over my head, I thought it was much better to get into the way of service and out of the way of being insulted, and as the style of your Lordship's letter is pretty strong I must take the liberty to inform you that though I should have been very glad to have gone with G. Amherst to join the army upon the Lakes, and offered my services immediately after the reduction of Louisbourg to carry a reinforcement to Mr. Abercromby if Quebec was not to be attacked; yet rather than receive orders in the Government [of Nova Scotia] from an officer younger than myself (though a very worthy man) I should certainly have desired leave to resign my commission for as I neither ask nor expect any favour, so I never intend to submit to any ill-usage whatsoever.”

From which one thing is clear: that it was proposed to reward Wolfe's services by supercession and that Wolfe would not submit to it. Was Amherst, who was anxious he should remain, in any way responsible?

<sup>1</sup> *His. MSS. Com.* IX, iii, p. 77.

(<sup>2</sup>) Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 202.

## CHAPTER IX

### PREPARING FOR THE ST. LAWRENCE

WOLFE, to be known for a while, until a greater achievement eclipsed his Cape Breton performances, as the hero of Louisbourg, came back to England with Admiral Boscawen in the *Namur*. The country rejoiced, and Parliament voted its cordial thanks to the Admiral and General Amherst. Wolfe's portion was something approaching hero-worship : everybody knew what he had done ; everybody seemed to be singing his praises ; and the only person who seemed unconscious that he was a hero was—himself. When he reached Portsmouth on the 1st November, he went straight to Salisbury to join the 67th Regiment whose Colonel he now was, there to await leave to repair to town. Leave came in a few days ; he was at Blackheath on the 17th writing to his uncle Walter : “ I wish I could say that my health was such as a soldier should have. Long passages and foggy weather have left their natural effects upon me. The people here say I look well. No care shall be wanting to get ready for the next campaign. They can propose no service to me that I shall refuse to undertake unless where capacity is short of the task.” The next campaign ! Pitt was already busy with plans for 1759. The year now drawing to a close had gone splendidly for England. The French coast had suffered severely from British expeditions ; French fleets had been held in check or crushed altogether

A great  
year.



by Hawke and Osborn ; Pitt had rendered Frederick invaluable service by his subsidies and Prince Ferdinand had been appointed to command the British Hanoverian forces in place of the Duke of Cumberland ; Fort St. Louis in Senegal and the Island of Goree had been captured ; the Isle of Cape Breton was British ; Bradstreet had by his one brilliant stroke neutralised Montcalm's victory at Ticonderoga and made the way easier for Forbes to capture Duquesne, as he did in November, renaming it Fort Pitt, to become in time that hive of industry, Pittsburg. Pitt had no reason to be dissatisfied with his work in 1758, qualified though it might be by Ticonderoga and one or two smaller reverses.

An  
annoying  
discovery.

With genuine concern Wolfe learned that Pitt had intended to continue him on service in America. He wrote at once to the Minister explaining that it was understood by Lord Ligonier, the Commander-in-Chief and Amherst, that from the condition of his health and other circumstances, he would return to England at the end of the campaign. The discovery was particularly annoying because none had been so anxious as he to carry the campaign to the St. Lawrence. "I take the freedom," he said to Pitt, "to acquaint you that I have no objection to serving in America and particularly in the River St. Lawrence if any operations are to be carried on there. The favour I ask is only to be allowed a sufficient time to repair the injury done to my constitution by the long confinement at sea, that I may be the better able to go through the business of the next summer." Back again at Salisbury he wrote to his friend Rickson a long letter in which he reiterated many



of the points as to Louisbourg familiar in other letters. The British force in America, he said, "was so superior to the enemy's that we might have hoped for greater success. But it pleased the Disposer of all things to check our presumption by permitting Mr. Abercromby to hurry on that precipitate attack on Ticonderoga." He expected to hear any day that a new attempt had been made, "and I can't flatter myself that they have succeeded, not from any idea of the Marquis de Montcalm's abilities, but from a very poor opinion of our own." As for himself, he added, he had signified to Mr. Pitt that he might "dispose of my slight carcass as he pleases, and that I am ready for any undertaking within the reach and compass of my skill and cunning. I am in a very bad condition both with the gravel and rheumatism, but I had much rather die than decline any kind of service that offers. If I followed my own taste, it would lead me into Germany; and if my poor talent was consulted, they would place me in the cavalry, because nature has given me good eyes, and a warmth of temper to follow the first impressions. However, it is not our part to choose, but to obey. My opinion is, that I shall join the army in America, where, if fortune favours our force and best endeavours, we may hope to triumph."

Wolfe watched events in Germany the more closely because his old Regiment was doing excellent work with Prince Ferdinand—an earnest of better things to come when Kingsley's men should cover themselves with glory at Minden. He told one of his old captains how pleased he was that the discipline they had helped to establish was producing "the natural effects whenever it comes to the proof." The Prince's

Wolfe ■  
disciplina-  
rian.

abilities he rated very high. "It is my fortune to be cursed with American service; yours to serve in an army commanded by a great and able prince where I would have been if my choice and inclinations had been consulted." During the short time spent with the 67th, he seems to have left the same impression on its discipline that he left on the 20th. The greatest compliment was paid to its abiding influence some years later, when a Russian General asked leave to borrow two or three privates in order to drill his own men in the way of the 67th. Major Campbell then in command said the only merit due to himself was the attention and strictness with which he had followed the system introduced by Wolfe.<sup>1</sup>

The  
Quebec  
command.

For the benefit of his health, Wolfe went to Bath on the 7th December, and a week or ten days later received a summons to London from Pitt. The great Minister and the young soldier both had Quebec in mind, but with the difference that whilst Wolfe had urged the importance of an expedition to the St. Lawrence in which he might serve under another, Pitt had decided that Wolfe himself was to command that most hazardous portion of a new tripartite campaign. Only a Pitt would have dared propose for such an enterprise a soldier whose very age was not equal to the length of other veterans' services. Pitt knew his man. After the interview Wolfe kept his own counsel, though naturally rumours of important developments were soon afloat. Even to his old friend Warde he did not divulge the facts when he wrote on the 20th December to ask if he might mention Warde's name for distant, difficult, and

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir James Campbell of Ardkinglass*, quoted by Wright, p. 470.

disagreeable service such as would make a call on all his skill and abilities. "If the employment of Adjutant-General or perhaps of Quartermaster to a very hazardous enterprise be to your taste, there are people who would be extremely glad of your assistance. There is no immediate advantage arising from it. That of being useful to the public at the expense of your health and constitution is a recommendation that cannot be strongly urged." Warde was ready to serve under his whilom playmate of Squerryes, but anticipated opposition in certain quarters. His willingness to fall in with Wolfe's suggestion is clear from Wolfe's reply that his "readiness" encouraged him to hope their united efforts might be useful and that he would desire to be excused from these "dangerous honours" if he could not have his own men. For some reason Warde did not go to Quebec with Wolfe. That reason must have been ample—more ample than Mr. Bradley suggests when he says that "Warde in spite of his sincere regard for his friend, not unnaturally as a horse soldier, preferred the battlefields of Europe, whither he was shortly sent, to the siege of an American fortress, howsoever important."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Warde's inclinations combined with official objections to determine the matter. There is no ground for suggesting that Warde voluntarily rejected an offer on his acceptance of which Wolfe set so high a value. Wolfe told "the leading men" that if they charged a young soldier with weighty responsibilities they must give him the best assistance. He knew in which direction to look for such assistance. He had another friend in mind—Guy Carleton. It was unfortunate that Carleton was

Why did  
George  
Warde not  
join?

<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, p. 131.

out of favour with the king. He had spoken disrespectfully of the Hanoverians, and the king punished him. He refused him permission to join Wolfe at Louisbourg, and now when Wolfe included Carleton's name in his staff it was struck out by the royal quill. But Wolfe was as firm on the one side as the king on the other. After Louisbourg he expressed the view that if Carleton had been there the business might have been much expedited. "So much depends upon the abilities of individuals in war that there cannot be too great care taken in the choice of men for the different offices of trust and importance."<sup>1</sup> He was determined to have his own men now, and it was only after a strenuous fight against the king's prejudices, during which Pitt strongly urged Wolfe's claim, and Lord Ligonier had several animated audiences in support of it, that Carleton was included as Quartermaster-General. As Pitt said, to refuse compliance with the General's request was to make it impossible to hold him responsible if he should fail.

The  
Townshend  
appoint-  
ment.

Wolfe made more than one exceptional appointment; he had as sharp an eye for merit as had Pitt in selecting himself. His three Brigadiers were to be Robert Monckton, son of Viscount Galway, who had seen service in Germany, Flanders, and America; George Townshend, eldest son of Viscount Townshend; and James Murray, son of Lord Elibank in whose capacity for command Wolfe had the greatest confidence. Townshend was not one of Wolfe's men. In temperament they were unlike, and Townshend had

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lord G. Sackville. *His. MSS. Com.*, IX, iii, p. 76.

possibly been spoiled by admiring friends. His appointment is generally said to have been the direct result of social influence. He held an immoderate idea of the claims of birth over ability; if that idea could have been eliminated, such is the impression conveyed, he would have made a better colleague. What his critics said, Horace Walpole summarised in a caustic sentence: "A very particular young man who with much address, some honour, no knowledge, great fickleness, greater want of judgment, and with still more disposition to ridicule, had promised once or twice to make a good speaker." In Walpole's view, after the appointment, Townshend, so far as wrong-headedness went, was "very proper for a hero." Townshend's shortcomings are easy to detect; if we respect him only in the degree to which he loved Wolfe he will not command much esteem, but he was a good soldier and if Wolfe had not been assured on that side Townshend would never have formed one of his staff. Wolfe would not have taken the risk. To suggest that he would have allowed social claims to over-ride professional considerations is to reflect sharply on himself. Wolfe's difficulties were indicated in a letter to Major Alexander Murray, whom he wished to serve. He was opposed by "a torrent of family interest" which tended to bear down justice itself. But the most careful reading between the lines of Townshend's life lends little colour to the suggestions of his enemies. Townshend had seen service as Wolfe had at Dettingen and Laffeldt and Culloden, and after the fall of Louisbourg he wrote to Pitt to ask to be employed in some expedition against France. Lord Ligonier mentioned the matter to the King and the letter Townshend received from

Wolfe hardly bears out Walpole's too ready depreciation—

"TO COLONEL THE HONBLE. GEORGE TOWNSHEND. <sup>(1)</sup>

"SIR,—

"I came to town last night and found the letter you have done me the honour to write. Your name was mentioned to me by the Mareschal, and my answer was that such an example in a person of your rank and character could not but have the best effects upon the troops in America, and indeed upon the whole military part of the nation; and I took the freedom to add that what might be wanting in experience was amply made up in an extent of capacity and activity of mind, that would find nothing difficult in our business. I am to thank you for the good opinion you have entertained of me and for the manner in which you have taken occasion to express your favourable sentiments. I persuade myself that we shall concur heartily for the public service—the operation in question will require our united efforts and the utmost exertion of every man's spirit and judgment.

"I conclude we are to sail with Mr. Saunders' squadron. Till then you do what is most agreeable to yourself. If I hear anything that concerns you to know, be assured of the earliest intelligence.

"I have the honour to be with the highest esteem, Sir, your  
"Most obedient and faithful humble servant,

"J. WOLFE.

"*London, 6th Jan., 1759.*"

Miss  
Lowther.

After his interview with Pitt, Wolfe went back to Bath to recruit his health, to mature his plans, and to enter on a campaign of another sort. His precise relations with Miss Katherine Lowther, the sister of Sir James Lowther, who was to become first Earl of Lonsdale, must be left to the imagination.<sup>2</sup> Clues

<sup>(1)</sup> *Military Life of George Townshend*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Thackeray's account in *The Virginians* of Wolfe's love for Miss Lowther is purely imaginary if it be true that there was no engagement till the winter of 1758-9.

followed up by ardent desire to know all that is possible of everything affecting James Wolfe have yielded little. We may conjure up any idyllic story we choose of the second surrender of this brilliant, high souled, ailing young warrior just appointed to the command of an expedition of world-wide significance, taking to heart a woman of whom it was said that rank and large fortune were among her least recommendations. All that is certain is that she now entered definitely into Wolfe's life, but no tangible evidence to that effect is forthcoming until the fateful day which gave Great Britain a new dominion and cost her one of her noblest sons.

Whatever the facts may be, Wolfe can have had little time for the duties of suitor nor opportunity for that perfect rest which he sought. Pitt would have given him plenty to keep him busy. The Secretary of State's letter to Amherst, who had succeeded Abercromby as Commander-in-Chief in America, announced Wolfe's appointment as Major-General for purposes of the American campaign. Amherst himself was to command an expedition which was to make its way by Ticonderoga and Crown Point to the St. Lawrence, Montreal, and Quebec, a third expedition advancing *viâ* Niagara. Forbes would have commanded the last, but the Duquesne Campaign had left him a complete physical wreck and Brigadier Prideaux was appointed in his stead. Amherst was instructed at great length as to the steps he was to take in preparation for Wolfe's arrival at Louisbourg in April or early in May. Pitt's letter was a masterly guide to the means by which a great end was to be accomplished.<sup>1</sup> It left to the initiative of the man

Plan of  
campaign  
for 1759.

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. i, p. 432-442.



Parsimony  
and public  
service.

on the spot only those things which the responsible Minister could not possibly determine. Wolfe's commission was signed on the 12th January, 1759. The local character of that commission, which meant that he was plain Colonel Wolfe at home, Major-General in America, and until he should join hands with Amherst, Commander-in-Chief on the St. Lawrence, involved embarrassing financial considerations. Amherst, as Commander-in-Chief in fact, received £10 a day and £1,000 for expenses, but Wolfe, as a practically independent commander for some time to come with equal claims upon his purse, received £2 a day and no allowance for expenses. It was of course ludicrously inadequate and he told Lord Barrington, the Secretary for War, that he would have to borrow from his father unless some allowance from the public purse were made. Lord Barrington reassured him. Representations were made to the King, £500 was granted without demur, and more was promised if it should be necessary. Munificent treatment for one on whom the fate of an Empire hung ! Economy there must be somewhere—such was the plea : then why not economise in regard to essential public enterprises whilst unessential workers grew fat at the public expense ? In view of what happened when officialism was called upon to make pecuniary acknowledgment of Wolfe's inestimable service in the days to come, one can but recognise the generosity shown in anticipation. Pitt himself was so superior to considerations of hard cash that he certainly would have made no attempt to gauge Wolfe's worth in pounds, shillings and pence. Wolfe's services, like his own, were patriotically speaking priceless.



Nor did Wolfe complain, though he must have been conscious that he was expected to do the big job of the campaign on slender resources. He said he thought £500 would be ample. What he wanted now as ever was to be left free to do the work in hand without having to bother about immediate ways and means. Love is not the only thing which flies out when poverty enters, and a nature such as Wolfe's would worry more about inability to discharge a small debt than about failure to compete successfully with less able men in the acquisition of material gains. Lord Barrington may well have been "touched" by his modesty: it was a quality little in evidence among the placemen of the eighteenth century. If Wolfe knew that his own abilities were a good deal in advance of those of many of the leading military men with whom he was brought in contact, he regarded the fact more in sorrow than in pride. On the 29th January, he wrote to his uncle Walter: "I am to act a greater part in this business than I wish or desire. The backwardness of some of the leading officers has in some measure forced the Government to go so low. I shall do my best and leave the rest to fortune as perforce we must when there are not the most commanding abilities. . . . If I have health and constitution enough for the campaign I shall think myself a lucky man; what happens afterwards is not of great consequence."

**Wolfe's  
modesty.**

Two anecdotes recorded of Wolfe in the interval between his appointment and his sailing again for America are eloquent of the average politician's inability to understand him. Pitt's nominal chief, Newcastle, took occasion to inform the King that Wolfe was mad. The King replied: "Mad, is he?"

**Misunder-  
stood by  
the poli-  
ticians.**

Then I hope he will bite some of my generals." George II was a soldier and prepared to take the consequences of any amount of such madness. The other story had its origin, not in stupidity, but in a quality less amiable. It relates to a little dinner given by Pitt to Wolfe on the eve of his departure. Lord Temple was the only other guest. "As the evening advanced Wolfe, heated perhaps by his own aspiring thoughts and the unwonted society of statesmen, broke forth into a strain of gasconade and bravado. He drew his sword, he rapped the table with it, he flourished it round the room, he talked of the mighty things which that sword was to achieve. The two ministers sat aghast at an exhibition so unusual from any man of real sense and real spirit. And when at last Wolfe had taken his leave, and his carriage was heard to roll from the door, Pitt seemed for the moment shaken in the high opinion which his deliberate judgment had formed of Wolfe; he lifted up his eyes and arms and exclaimed to Lord Temple: 'Good God! That I should have entrusted the fate of the country and the administration to such hands.'"<sup>1</sup> In order to allow Wolfe no chance of escape, we are solemnly told that he was none the worse for wine. This absurd story I have seen illustrated in popular works in order, I suppose, to enable the people of England the better to estimate so fine a specimen of transpontine military swagger. Wright chivalrously examines the evidence at considerable length in disproof of the story.<sup>2</sup> Its real disproof is the character of the chief witness and the character of

<sup>1</sup> Mahon's *History of England*, vol. iv, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Wolfe*, pp. 483-487.

Wolfe himself. Two sentences from the brief note to his mother in which he sought to avoid "the formality of leave-taking" proclaim the man: "I shall carry this business through with my best abilities. The rest you know is in the hands of Providence, to whose care I hope your good life and conduct will recommend your son."

A fleet of sixty transports, six sail of the line and nine frigates, sailed from Portsmouth under Rear-Admiral Holmes in the middle of February to be followed on the 17th by a squadron under Admiral Saunders, who was to command the fleet in the St. Lawrence. Wolfe was with the Admiral on board the *Neptune*, which carried ninety guns. Weather was against the precise ordering of events as usual. Wolfe intended to make straight for Louisbourg, but the harbour was ice-bound, and the *Neptune* went instead to Halifax. They put into port ten days later than was originally contemplated. In America, Admiral Durell had been energetically advancing preparations on the naval side, and Amherst, Lawrence, and others had been hard at work on the military. Pitt's instructions were that Amherst was to have all ready for Wolfe to start from Louisbourg by the 12th May, but it was some days later than that before the fleet could even move from Halifax to Louisbourg. Amherst was to hurry up with his own arrangements so that operations might begin by the 1st. If Amherst were moving by the beginning of May he would possibly make the way easier for Wolfe at Quebec, and when Wolfe attacked Quebec forces would certainly be drawn from elsewhere. They would thus be mutually helpful. It has been said that Pitt never anticipated that Wolfe would

Pitt's  
anticipa-  
tions.

capture Quebec without the immediate co-operation of Amherst, who it was hoped would arrive on the St. Lawrence in the course of the summer. Secret instructions issued to Wolfe make it clear that Pitt foresaw the possibility of Wolfe's success before he got into touch with Amherst. He was given general directions as to what he should do "in case by the Blessing of God upon our arms" he should make himself master of Quebec; "ulterior operations" were left to his and Saunders' discretion.<sup>1</sup>

The  
strength of  
the Army.

According to Pitt's calculations, Wolfe was to command 12,000 men, but when the number assembled at Louisbourg was totalled, it was found that there were only 8,635, or less than 75 per cent. of the number Pitt intended. As Wolfe was originally of opinion that 12,000 would not be a sufficient force, the actual numbers with which he embarked on this great enterprise were barely half what he would have taken if he could. Writing to Pitt from Halifax Harbour the day after he arrived, he expressed his satisfaction with what had been done in other respects. He pointed out that every man in Canada was a soldier. "Our troops are good and very well disposed. If valour can make amends for want of numbers we shall probably succeed. Any accident on the river or sickness among the men might put us in some difficulties." Whilst waiting at Halifax he drew up various orders for the guidance of the troops in circumstances of urgency during the voyage up the St. Lawrence, and for the better preservation of the men's health whilst on board ship. Personal sorrow came to him shortly after he reached Louisbourg: his father died at Blackheath on the 26th March,

<sup>1</sup> Doughty, vol. ii, p. 19.

and the sense of bereavement was intensified by the thought of his mother's loneliness. In a letter to his uncle from Louisbourg on the 19th May he gave a lengthy account of the military and naval position as he saw it within a fortnight of his departure for Quebec.

" We are ordered to attack Quebec—a very nice operation. The fleet consists of twenty-two sail of the line and many frigates; the army of 9,000 men;—in England it is called 12,000. We have ten battalions, three companies of Grenadiers, some Marines (if the Admiral can spare them), and six new-raised companies of North American Rangers—not complete, and the worst soldiers in the universe; a great train of artillery, plenty of provisions, tools, and implements of all sorts; three Brigadiers under me,—all men of great spirit; some Colonels of reputation, Carleton for Quarter-master-General, and upon whom I chiefly rely for the engineering part. Engineers very indifferent, and of little experience; but we have none better. The regular troops in Canada consist of eight battalions of old Foot—about 400 a battalion—and forty companies of Marines (or colony troops)—forty men a company. They can gather together 8,000 or 10,000 Canadians, and perhaps 1,000 Indians. As they are attacked by the side of Montreal by an enemy of 12,000 fighting men [Amherst's force] they must necessarily divide their force; but, as the loss of the capital implies the loss of the colony, their chief attention will naturally be there, and therefore I reckon we may find at Quebec six battalions, some companies of marines, four or five thousand Canadians, and some Indians, altogether not much inferior to their enemy."

As a matter of fact, the force with which Montcalm opposed Wolfe was some 13,000 or 14,000 strong; so that numerically Montcalm had a heavy advantage. Wolfe explained to his uncle how Rear-Admiral Durell had gone up the river with ten sail to cut off succours for Quebec—which, unfortunately for the subsequent operations, he only partially succeeded in doing—and to seize islands where the navigation was most

Wolfe's  
confidence.

dangerous. He was to push with his squadron as far up the river as possible "that all might be free and open behind." The Commander-in-Chief of the fleet Wolfe described as "a zealous brave officer"—a just tribute to Admiral Saunders and a proof of the excellent relations between the two services. Wolfe said: "It is the business of our naval force to be masters of the river both above and below the town. If I find the enemy is strong, audacious and well commanded, I shall proceed with the utmost caution and circumspection, giving Mr. Amherst time to use his superiority. If they are timid, weak and ignorant, we shall push them with more vivacity that we may be able before the summer is gone to assist the Commander-in-Chief. I reckon we shall have a smart action at the passage of the river St. Charles, unless we can steal a detachment up the river St. Lawrence and land them three, four, five miles or more above the town, and get time to entrench so strongly that they won't care to attack." Especially significant is this last sentence in view of the developments of the next three months. It indicates Wolfe's original idea. Again, he referred to the army under his command as "rather too small for the undertaking, but it is well composed." Finally, he told his uncle: "You may be assured that I shall take all proper care of my own person, unless in case of the last importance where it becomes a duty to do otherwise. I never put myself unnecessarily into the way of danger. Young troops must be encouraged at first. What appears hazardous sometimes is really not so to people who know the country"—as he had proved by the small losses among his own men at Louisbourg ten months previously.

The troops waiting to put to sea were in high spirits. Wolfe reviewed them battalion by battalion on shore, and to an officer's apology for his men's deficiency in a new exercise he is said to have made response : " Poh ! poh ! new exercise—new fiddlestick ! if they are otherwise well disciplined and will fight that's all I require of them." Among the novelties in the composition of the army was a body of Louisbourg Grenadiers, whom Wolfe had specially formed as a recognition of the men's excellent service in the previous year's siege. They were commanded by Alexander Murray. It was one of Wolfe's happy thoughts as had been the formation of the Light Infantry for Louisbourg. The army, its shortage notwithstanding, was slow in assembling owing to fog and the difficulties of transport, and it was the first of June when the fleet began to move. For nearly a week the sailings of the troopships, comprising seventy-six vessels, seventeen flat-bottomed boats, 122 cutters, and thirteen whaleboats, continued. " British colours on every French fort, port and garrison in America,"<sup>1</sup> was the toast in favour with the officers, and the men by their shouts and cheers as the ships cleared the harbour, echoed the sentiment. Wolfe's report to Pitt of the little accidents that had delayed departure was sent off from the *Neptune* on the 6th. Several transports had not joined them ; some of the companies of Rangers provided by the Colonies were very bad ; the camp equipage of three regiments was missing ; certain of the Boston Militia wanted as pioneers refused an invitation to go : " It seldom happens that a New England man prefers service to a lazy life," said Wolfe, and money for

Incidental  
difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> Knox : *Journal*, vol. i, p. 279.

which he had written to Amherst was not forthcoming. "This is one of the first sieges perhaps that ever was undertaken without it." But these little troubles were incidental. Wolfe's confidence as to the issue was complete. "We expect to find a good part of the force of Canada at Quebec, and we are prepared to meet them. Whatever the end is, I flatter myself that his Majesty will not be dissatisfied with the behaviour of the troops."



## CHAPTER X

### FROM CHAMPLAIN TO MONTCALM

NEVER did a great country throw away Empire more recklessly than France in America. History can supply few more striking instances of flaunting ambition o'erleaping itself. The St. Lawrence was, so far as record tells, hers by discovery; it was certainly hers by right of occupation. Cartier was the first European to find his way up the mighty river which for hundreds of miles is a veritable arm of the sea, and Champlain was the founder of Quebec. The great promontory which thrusts "its scarped front into the surging torrent" was for a century and a half the pivot of French fortunes in North America, and for a century and a half has perhaps been the most romantic spot in the British Empire. "Here," as Parkman said, "clothed in the majesty of solitude, breaking the stern poetry of the wilderness, rose the cliffs, now rich with heroic memories"<sup>1</sup>—heroic memories which belong to France, to Great Britain, to the United States of America, memories of Frontenac and Montcalm, of Wolfe and Carleton, of Montgomery and Arnold.

Quebec's  
heroic  
memories.

When England and France both woke up to transatlantic possibilities at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, France, roughly speaking, took the northern and less hospitable half of the eastern coast of North America, and England the southern and generally more

French and  
English  
colonies :  
a contrast.

<sup>1</sup> *Pioneers of France in the New World*, p. 207.

inviting stretch. Antagonists and rivals as France and England were, their very lines of communication over-seas crossed. In origin and objects the colonies were dissimilar. The English colonies were founded now for liberty's sake, now for purposes of agriculture and commerce, now for the profits of proprietors or to further some royal or patriotic end. The French colonies were intended to secure an Empire beyond the seas, the monopoly of rich trades such as the fur, the conversion of the heathen, incidentally maybe to discover the great western water route to the east which for so long was believed to exist. The English colonies whatever their difficulties and dangers, internal or external, prospered; New France languished. Bound in the swaddling clothes of red tape made and tied in Paris, limbs that might have been healthy and strong were impoverished and dwarfed. France sent gallant sons to the St. Lawrence to settle, to explore, to fight the wilderness, to become involved in native strife; she sent priests to martyrdom; and she sent soldiers and statesmen on that most heart-breaking of all missions—to construct an Empire without material resources. Jealous of English expansion, she handicapped her own people in competition, and, instead of free men, too often selected for colonists the sweepings of the streets and gaols of her great towns.

**Absolut-  
ism.**

Everything was controlled by the King or his ministers at a distance of four or five thousand miles; between the despatch and receipt of instructions months elapsed and situations changed. A Frontenac was the creature of uncompromising absolutism; *coureurs de bois*, who should have been encouraged, were outlawed, and La Salle and other intrepid

explorers acted in defiance of orders from home.<sup>1</sup> Yet if orders had been obeyed New France might have been saved, La Salle's voyages being mainly responsible for the attempt to hem the English colonies in between the Alleghanies and the sea. New countries cannot, however, be built up without enterprise, and the French settlers had not too many inspiring and animating examples. The French colonial system was nicely calculated to foster enterprise in the wrong direction. Fortunes were made at the expense of people who had no voice in their own affairs. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the population of New France, Indians apart, did not exceed some eighty to ninety thousand. With such a population so ruled, France proposed to take possession of a continent, the extent of which was unknown and to leave a coast strip to rivals whose numbers were as far in excess of her own as was their virility.

From the first Quebec had been a menace to the English, which as early as 1628 they took measures to remove. The Kirkes led an English fleet up the St. Lawrence, did a certain amount of damage, gave the habitants a bad fright and retired. Champlain's rude fort was not in a condition to withstand serious attack. Nor the following year, when the Kirkes re-appeared, were the people in a mood for fighting. Champlain had difficulty in feeding his tiny garrison and defence was not to be thought of. The terms of capitulation were made easy and the English flag floated over Quebec for the first time in 1629. England and France had concluded a peace before the Kirkes entered Quebec, and the place should have been

The  
English  
and  
Quebec.

<sup>1</sup> Douglas: *Old France in the New World*, p. 390.

restored immediately. Charles I held it for three years against the balance of his Queen's dowry, which the French King had not paid. When half a century later the great Frontenac became Governor, he systematically harried the English settlements at the same time that he gave special attention to the defences of Quebec. In 1690 the colony of Massachusetts decided to strike at the city in the name of King William. They sent a fleet under Sir William Phipps who haughtily demanded that Quebec should be surrendered within an hour "upon the peril that would ensue." He was met by an equally haughty response that the Prince of Orange was a usurper and that Frontenac the servant of Louis XIV would answer with the mouths of his cannon. Phipps found him as good as his word, and after a week's fighting by land and water the English, badly battered, disappeared once more. During the war of the Spanish succession Quebec was to be attacked by England and her colonies jointly. An army was to march overland from New England, whilst a fleet under Sir Hovenden Walker was to co-operate on the St. Lawrence. The fleet was unable to navigate the river, some battleships and several hundred lives were sacrificed, the enterprise was abandoned and the overland force was recalled. Phipps and Walker succeeded in giving Quebec a sense of security which it was to enjoy till Wolfe and Saunders dispelled all illusions.

La  
Frippone.

The state of Canada at the time that the campaign of 1759 was opened by Amherst and Wolfe was pitiable. Neglected by the Mother Country whose hands were over full in Europe, battened on by officials who made fortunes out of her misery, deficient in food

supplies and in regular defenders, her councils were torn by dissensions between those whom her misfortunes should have made one. Vaudreuil, a Canadian by birth, was governor, Montcalm, commander-in-chief, Bigot, intendant. Vaudreuil's vanity and jealousy, combined with Bigot's colossal venality, made the task of the man charged with the military defence of the colony one of extraordinary difficulty. Poor colony! the sport of Pompadour and Louis XV in Europe, and of Vaudreuil and Bigot in America! Bigot's record as given by Parkman, who devoted patient examination to all the documents in French and Canadian archives, is almost incredible.<sup>1</sup> His position placed the commerce, the finance and the civil administration entirely at his mercy, and trust was never more shamelessly abused. With the assistance of many accomplices, he bought at an absurdly low rate for an establishment run by himself, which came to be known as La Frippone, or the Cheat, goods belonging to the King and re-sold them to the King at more than double the price. When Bigot sent in his bills to Paris, Ministers examined them curiously and made some sharp reflections which hurt the poor sensitive intendant. Minister Berryer seems to have seen through his not very subtle practices, but instead of insisting on his dismissal, put some very plain questions and urged him to give these things his serious attention. "What has become of the immense quantity of provisions sent to Canada last year? I am forced to conclude that the King's stores are set down as consumed from the moment they arrive and then sold to his Majesty at exorbitant prices. Thus the King buys stores in France, and

<sup>1</sup> Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, chap. xvii.

then buys them again in Canada. I no longer wonder at the immense fortunes made in the colony." Well might Montcalm, who was instrumental in bringing knowledge of Bigot's transactions to the French Ministry, exclaim: "What a country! Here all the knaves grow rich and the honest men are ruined." Vaudreuil filled a peculiarly perverse rôle. He hated Montcalm and, at whatever risk to the Canada he loved, placed every obstacle in his way, denounced any miscarriage as due to Montcalm's refusal to take his advice, and appropriated credit for every success. He held Bigot in high regard and at a time when the intendant's malefactions were the most obvious thing in Canada, found words in his defence. He supported the man who was ruining Canada and opposed the one man who might have saved her. Yet Vaudreuil was not regarded as a rogue. He was rather the high placed tool of rogues. He did not share their ill-gotten millions, and when years after he and Bigot and the rest were brought to trial in France, Vaudreuil was acquitted whilst they were subject to heavy penalties.

Montcalm  
and Wolfe :  
■ parallel.

What strikes one about the Marquis de Montcalm is, allowing for the difference of nationality and circumstances, the similarity between his views and work, and the record of Wolfe with whom his name is indissolubly connected in history. Montcalm was born in the Chateau de Candiac near Nîmes on the 29th February, 1712, and after a few years under a tutor named Dumas, entered the army at fifteen. He seems to have been sufficiently brilliant to make M. Dumas anxious that he should do better than he did. In a letter to his father, Montcalm set out his aims as a young man in explicit terms: "To be an

honourable man of good morals, brave, and a Christian. To read in moderation ; to know as much Greek and Latin as most men of the world ; also the four rules of arithmetic, and something of history, geography, and French and Latin belles lettres as well as to have a taste for the arts and sciences ; to be fond of intellectual accuracy if I do not possess it myself. And, above all, to be obedient, docile and very submissive to your orders, and those of my dear mother, and to defer to the advice of M. Dumas. To fence and ride as well as my small abilities will permit." With Montcalm as with Wolfe a good mother's influence was in evidence through life. He fought in the war brought about by the struggle for the Polish throne between the Elector of Saxony and Stanislaus, and whilst in camp learnt German and " read more Greek, thanks to my loneliness, than I had done for three or four years." At twenty-two he married—at about the age when Wolfe was passionately in love with Miss Lawson. He fretted under inaction as Wolfe did and finding that his regiment was to take no part in the war of the Austrian succession, he secured himself a special appointment. He was as keen for promotion and to justify it by efficiency as Wolfe was, and held positions in advance of his official rank. Major Wood points out that though Montcalm had been more carefully educated than Wolfe, both had " that sympathetic insight into life which craves expression in the fittest words and naturally stimulates a man both to read the best in literature and to find a true style for himself when he comes to write."<sup>1</sup> Montcalm's letters are as remarkable as Wolfe's, in a literary way

<sup>1</sup> *The Fight for Canada*, p. 126.



more remarkable perhaps. When a first-rate officer was wanted to command the French forces in Canada, the Minister for War recommended Montcalm and early in 1756 he was appointed with the Chevalier de Lévis as his second in command and M. de Bourlamaque third.

Montcalm's  
commis-  
sion.

His commission, unhappily for him, was not on all fours with that given to Wolfe. He was to be commander, with the rank of Major-General, and to act under the authority of the Governor-General, M. de Vaudreuil ! “ As the said Marquis de Montcalm is to command only under the Governor's authority and be subordinate in all matters, M. de Montcalm shall only execute and see that the troops under his command execute all the Governor's orders.” In times of peace, even such warlike peace as existed in America, these conditions were necessary to civil supremacy, but when war came they were the very handcuffs of military efficiency. They cost Montcalm many a pang, and it was not until affairs in America had reached a most critical stage that M. de Vaudreuil, to his infinite chagrin, was told to conform in military matters to Montcalm's views. Montcalm in America, the Governor's attitude notwithstanding, was not long in making his energetic and able presence felt on the confines of the British Colonies ; Oswego, Fort William Henry, and Ticonderoga were samples of his soldierly enterprise and resource. His reputation would stand even higher than it does if it were possible wholly to disclaim his responsibility for the atrocious misdeeds of his Indians. Better have shot down his allies and taken the risks it involved than allow the tomahawk to do its ghastly work among defenceless men and women.



Otherwise Montcalm's escutcheon is untarnished. His patriotism was high above that of his fellows ; he was as clean handed in the very heart of corruption as Wolfe or Pitt. Anxious to leave Canada after his defeat of Abercromby, he was equally eager, after Bradstreet had captured Frontenac, to remain, in order to repair the affairs of the colony, or at least retard their ruin. "I wish my intentions may be seconded," he added significantly.

Both Montcalm and Vaudreuil sent urgent appeals to France for help during the latter part of 1758. **Appeals to France.** Bougainville, one of the envoys, explained to the court the desperate plight of the colony and begged for men and munitions, for food and for ships to hold the entrance of the St. Lawrence. France could do little. Her resources were being drained in Europe and the British swept the seas. If she could have afforded to part with troops and supplies she was afraid to send them lest they should be captured by the English. Yet she realised that Pitt's main effort was directed on America. As Pitt had laid his plans to conquer France in Europe by defeating her in America, so France decided on one bold stroke which might have the effect of saving Canada by turning the tables on England within her own boundaries. Big fleets were prepared at Havre and Brest and Toulon in 1759 with a view to a descent in force on England and Ireland. A blow at the very heart of the British Empire if not decisive would change the whole aspect of the war. There were no troops in England capable of meeting a French force if it were once landed. The navy saved England from this distracting effort. Vigilant as daring, her commanders never gave the French fleets a chance

of concentrating. They were always on hand, whatever the conditions of the weather. Boscawen resolved the Toulon fleet into its elements off Lagos; Rodney destroyed every vestige of boat at Havre and a large part of the town itself; Hawke watched Conflans at Brest for months and finally disposed of him in Quiberon Bay. There is something almost uncanny in the unerring instinct which enabled British admirals to anticipate the movements of the French fleets. They left Wolfe and Saunders free to do their great work on the St. Lawrence.

All Bou-  
gainville  
brought.

A proper appreciation of the probabilities made the French Ministers chary of attempting to comply with Bougainville's demands. They sent, however, plenty of advice and instructions. "As we must expect the English to turn all their force against Canada," wrote Belleisle to Montcalm in February, 1759,<sup>1</sup> "and attack you on several sides at once, it is necessary that you limit your plans of defence to the most essential points and those most closely connected, so that being concentrated within a smaller space, each part may be within reach of support and succour from the rest. How small soever may be the space you are able to hold, it is indispensable to keep a footing in North America, for if we once lose the country entirely its recovery will be almost impossible." Montcalm was urged to go to almost any extreme rather than submit to conditions as shameful as those imposed at Louisbourg, the memory of which he was expected to obliterate. Montcalm vowed that he would save "this unhappy colony" or perish. Bougainville's mission was not

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, pp. 84-5.

absolutely wasted. He returned with several vessels laden with provisions, an addition to the fighting strength of Canada of 326 men, and a generous complement of decorations for those who had distinguished themselves in the service of France. He reached the St. Lawrence just in time to escape with some of his store-ships the attentions of Admiral Durell. What he brought was gratefully received, for as Montcalm said, "to those who have nothing, a little is precious."

But he brought something more than a few provisions and men and gewgaws and words of advice. He brought news of the preparations of Great Britain—news of an army and a great fleet, of which the advance guard under Durell was already within eighty or ninety miles of Quebec. All Canada was stupefied. Montcalm hurried to Quebec ordering Bourlamaque to make the best stand he could at Ticonderoga against Amherst; the militia were called to the defence of the capital, and every able-bodied man and youth was pressed into the bearing of arms. Vaudreuil as usual blustered and boasted and breathed great things. He was not to be scared even though the enemy were at every door.<sup>1</sup> He proclaimed the wicked designs of the English—"leur projet etant se massacrer tout ce qui est Canadienne sans distinction de sexe ni d'age."<sup>2</sup> But, he said, Canada would bury her children under her ruins before they would surrender; there was no ruse, no zeal, nor resource which patriotic ingenuity might suggest that should not be forthcoming to ensnare the invader; what ardour could do to defeat the ambitious designs of the English would

Stupefying  
news.

<sup>1</sup> Casgrain: *Journal du Marquis de Montcalm*, p. 534

<sup>2</sup> Doughty, vol. ii, p. 48.

be done. He would hold his ground even to annihilation. Gasconade of this sort was entirely absent from Montcalm, who set about the task of preparing for the struggle with soldier-like energy and resource and entire loyalty to the wishes of the government at home. Vaudreuil obstructed when he should have assisted and acted when too late. "*Après le mort, le médecin,*" complained Montcalm bitterly.

## CHAPTER XI

### BEFORE QUEBEC

THREE weeks after leaving Louisbourg Wolfe set eyes for the first time on the frowning fortress in the St. Lawrence whose name is to his what Waterloo is to Wellington's, what Trafalgar is to Nelson's. It was a time full of incident and excited expectancy. Every mile of the gulf and river contained possibilities of surprise and disaster. The French fondly believed the St. Lawrence was unnavigable by the English unaided—a belief in itself a sufficient tribute to the hazards run. The Kirkes and Phipps had negotiated its currents and its surfs successfully, but Admiral Walker had gone to pieces off Anticosti. The French by landmarks and watermarks had made navigation reasonably safe, but every one of these guides had been removed in anticipation of the British approach. The voyager to-day who ascends the well-lighted and well-marked course can have little conception of the anxieties which beset navigation in the eighteenth century. Durell with his advance squadron had reached the Ile aux Coudres in safety, but Saunders, with a vast collection of transports carrying troops on whom everything depended, had very different responsibilities.

The French made their calculations without allowance for the wiles and the skill of the British sailor.

Navigating  
the St.  
Lawrence.

Astonishing  
the French  
pilots.

Durell, by running up the French flag had lured French pilots on board. A most amusing account is given by Knox of the fury of these patriotic guides compelled to assist the navigation of the English ships. One of them raged and swore that the English would never get through ; in a few days the walls of Quebec would be decorated with their scalps. With Vaudreuil, he believed that the English could not pass a war-fleet where the French, with 150 years' experience of the St. Lawrence, would not dare take a vessel of 100 tons burden without the most elaborate precautions. The gallant Master of the transport—a Trinity House veteran—on which the pilot found himself, was doubtful whether the Frenchman might not run them into difficulties even at the sacrifice of his life. Without a moment's hesitation therefore the Master took matters into his own hands, snapped his fingers at French menaces, and steered the vessel safely through the most treacherous channel known as the Traverse. In the hearty style of the British tar, he said he knew a thousand worse places in the Thames, and he'd convince the pilot, whose storming was silenced in sheer amazement, that an Englishman would go where a Frenchman dare not show his nose. Every now and then he would shout, " Ay, ay, my dears, mark it down—'A damn dangerous navigation.' If you do not make a sputter about it you will not get credit in England." Whatever he might get in England, he got plenty of credit on the St. Lawrence. When the pilot learned that the Master was a stranger to the river he lifted " his hands and eyes to heaven with astonishment and fervency." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Knox : vol. i.

Vaudreuil has been blamed for neglecting to occupy a position at the Traverse from which he could pour shot into the English fleet as it approached; his answer was that he believed the English could never pass the Traverse. Bigot endorsed the excuse by saying that the enemy made child's play of navigation, which to the French was always an anxious business.<sup>1</sup> The Chief Pilot of Quebec said that soundings had not been taken for twenty-five years; when he proposed to take them the necessary expenses were refused. As the expedition moved up the river the soldiers had plenty to interest them apart from the risks of navigation: the fine river and the fine scenery, the deserted villages and the bonfires which heralded the British advance. In the afternoon of the 26th June the Island of Orleans was reached. As the western end of the island juts its nose out into the river right opposite the Quebec headland, it might have been thought worth while to make some show of defence, but, again by Vaudreuil's orders, the 1,200 Canadians and Indians who held it, decamped and left Wolfe free to land. Everyone was charmed with the country, which was well-cultivated and homelike. "A bountiful island," said Sergeant Johnson. "A most agreeable prospect," said Knox; "windmills, watermills, churches, chapels, compact farm houses, all built with stone and covered some with wood and some with straw."

It was not till the following day that Wolfe was able to get the greater part of his troops on to the island, but in the company of his engineer-in-chief, Major Mackellar, he hastened to take stock of Quebec across the intervening basin. Mackellar, who knew

Vaudreuil's  
neglect.

<sup>1</sup> Doughty, vol. ii, p. 61.

the city, and had been assiduous in picking up scraps of information which enabled him to give the General a fairly complete account of its natural and artificial defences, had prepared him for the impressive spectacle now revealed by his glass.<sup>1</sup> A city of many churches, colleges, and public buildings, perched on a magnificent promontory and guarded by batteries, it was out of reach of any gun carried by vessels in the waters below. At the base of the cliff, on the stretch of shore between it and the river was the Lower Town, "by much the richest part of the whole, being chiefly taken up with the dwellings, warehouses and magazines of the principal merchants." At Quebec the St. Lawrence narrowed: Quebec apparently being a corruption of a native word meaning the narrowing of the river. The southern bank was formed by another headland called Point Levi, whilst immediately to the right of Quebec as Wolfe looked at it was the River St. Charles. Between the St. Charles and the Montmorency to the north of the point on which he stood, was Beauport, its church a conspicuous landmark. The shore was a series of low-lying cliffs rising to the Montmorency.

Guarding  
the St.  
Charles.

If Wolfe had not ascertained already he learned now that he would not fight Montcalm in Quebec at all. The shore between Quebec and the Montmorency Falls was one long line of strongly defended works, behind which Montcalm had posted 11,000 or 12,000 men, 2,000 being left under de Ramesay to look after the city. Montcalm was in fact in possession of the very ground over which, judging from his letter to his

<sup>1</sup> Mackellar's report is given in full by Doughty, vol. ii, Appendix.



uncle,<sup>1</sup> Wolfe had thought of marching with a view to the investment of Quebec. Curiously enough, as Wolfe's idea was to attack Quebec by crossing the St. Charles, so it was Montcalm's first idea to hold the St. Charles, but his second thoughts were strategically best. Montcalm realised the danger so thoroughly that a vessel was sunk at the mouth of the St. Charles lest any attempt should be made to utilise it. Had Wolfe been able to throw men across that river and attack Quebec from the country—the plains of Abraham—between it and the St. Lawrence, whilst Saunders kept the enemy busy from the Quebec basin, even perhaps got men up the St. Lawrence as was ultimately done, the story of the siege would have been very different from what it was. The question was whether ships could pass Quebec, swept as the river was by the French guns. With all his spirit and enterprise the Admiral would conceivably have refused to incur risks involving not only his fleet but the army. Mackellar's conviction was that on the land side Quebec's defences were weak, and Wolfe's problem was how to get at them. Quebec certainly could not be taken from the river side. As Mackellar said, the men-of-war could annoy, even destroy, the Lower Town, but the besieger would be as far as ever from possession of the Upper Town. Wolfe's stout heart must have beat a little more quickly as he took stock of Quebec, of the miles of earthworks, of redoubts and floating batteries. Almost unexampled in history, says Mr. Doughty,<sup>2</sup> were the activity and determination of the defenders of Canada. And how little it availed them !

<sup>1</sup> *Ante* p. 142.

■ Vol. ii, p. 28.

12—(2213)

Wolfe's  
proclama-  
tion.

By midday on the 27th, Wolfe's army was on the Island of Orleans. On the door of a church was found a letter addressed by the local priest to "The Worthy Officers of the British Army" asking them to protect the church and his house, and regretting they had not arrived before the asparagus ran to seed. Wolfe on his part drew up a proclamation to the Canadians which was translated into French.<sup>1</sup> I give the English version, ■ because the English version is what Wolfe actually wrote—

*"By his Excellency James Wolfe, Esq., Colonel of ■ Regiment of Infantry, Major-General and Commander-in-Chief of his Britannic Majesty's Forces in the River St. Lawrence, etc.*

"The formidable sea and land armament which the people of Canada now behold in the heart of the country, is intended by the King, my master, to check the insolence of France, to revenge the insults offered to the British colonies and totally to deprive the French of their most valuable settlement in North America. For these purposes is the formidable army under my command intended. The King wages no war with the industrious peasant, the sacred orders of religion, or the defenceless women and children; to these in their distressful circumstances, his royal clemency offers protection. The people may remain unmolested in their lands, inhabit their houses and enjoy their religion in security. For these inestimable blessings I expect the Canadians will take no part in the great contest between the two Crowns.<sup>(3)</sup> But if, by a vain obstinacy and misguided valour, they presume to appear in arms, they must expect the most fatal consequences—their habitations destroyed, their sacred temples exposed to an exasperated soldiery, their harvest utterly ruined, and the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Doughty gives the French version, vol. ii, pp. 67-70.

■ Wright, p. 517.

<sup>(3)</sup> The French version contains this important modification  
"Je leur promets ma protection, et je les assure qu'ils pourront sans craindre les moindres molestations, y jouir de leurs biens, suivre le culte de leur religion, en un mot jouir au milieu de la guerre de toutes les douceurs de la paix, pourvu qu'ils s'engagent à ne prendre directement ou indirectement aucune part à une dispute qui ne regarde que les deux Couronnes."

only passage for relief stopped up by a most formidable fleet. In this unhappy situation, and closely attacked by another great army, what can the wretched natives expect from opposition ?

“The unparalleled barbarities exerted by the French against our settlements in America might justify the bitterest revenge in the army under my command, but Britain breathes higher sentiments of humanity, and listens to the merciful dictates of the Christian religion. Yet should you suffer yourselves to be deluded by an imaginary prospect of our want of success ; should you refuse these terms and persist in opposition, then surely will the law of nations justify the waste of war, so necessary to crush an ungenerous enemy ; and then, the miserable Canadians must in the winter have the mortification of seeing their very families, for whom they have been exerting but a fruitless and indiscreet bravery, perish by the most dismal want and famine. In this great dilemma let the wisdom of the peoples of Canada show itself. Britain stretches out a powerful yet merciful hand ; faithful to her engagements and ready to secure her in her most valuable rights and possessions. France, unable to support Canada, deserts her cause at this important crisis, and during the whole war has assisted her with troops, who have been maintained only by making the natives feel all the weight of grievous and lawless oppression.

“Given at Laurent in the Island of Orleans, this 28th day of June, 1759.”

This proclamation had no effect. Wolfe could hardly have looked for any. But it was worth trying. He had heard much of the discontent among the Canadians and there was just a chance that they might prefer to remain neutral when not compelled to fight for the maintenance of the old régime. It was the old story : loyalty to an unnatural mother, if indeed that is not too harsh a term, rather than assistance to the most benevolent of strangers in arms against her. In any case Wolfe's proclamation was a warning to civilians not to start irregular warfare : if they wanted to fight they must join the fighting lines. French historians have said the document reflects

Loyal  
Canadians.

no honour on its author : a view which is certainly partial.

Flood and  
fire.

Wolfe had barely got his men on to the Island when a storm burst over the St. Lawrence and played havoc with much of the shipping. It was so violent that the sailors regarded the escape of the fleet as of happy augury for the operations about to begin. On the night of the 28th they were faced with another peril, not this time either wind or water, but fire. Mackellar said the French had long since let it be known that if an expedition was got up to Quebec they had at command an infallible invention for the destruction of ships. This "invention" took the form of *radeaux à feu*—or fire-rafts. The idea was to bind huge logs of timber together to coat them with inflammable composition, and float them down among the shipping, which would soon be in a blaze. That something of the sort would be attempted was therefore to be expected, and if it were attempted successfully, there must have been a bonfire of British hopes. Admiral Saunders was on his guard, but the sentries on duty on shore were taken unawares. Late at night seven of the eight vessels which Bigot had purchased from confederates for the good round sum of 1,000,000 livres according to Montcalm, were floated into mid-stream. Out of the darkness the British sentries suddenly detected these ships moving silently and stealthily towards them. They lost their nerve, and bolted, and for a time there was a small panic in the British camp—a panic which led to the arrest of the officer in command, whom Wolfe subsequently pardoned on account of his excellent character. But the General was severe : "Next to valour," he said, "the best qualities in a military

man are vigilance and caution." The British sentries were not the only people whose nerves gave out that night. The foremost fire-ship was in charge of a young officer whose courage and patience evaporated as he approached the danger zone. He set light to his vessel, loaded as it was with explosives and combustibles, prematurely: his action was the signal for others, and all except one who saw the mistake they were making, applied the torch and sought their own safety. The brave fellow who tried to avert the miscarriage of the enterprise was sacrificed with two companions to the demons of their own creation. A lovely starlit night, almost as by magic, was turned to an inferno. The flames shot up so brilliantly that the stars could not be seen, missiles were hurled in every direction, and explosion alternated with the hissing of water. The French crowded every building and eminence to get a sight of the destruction which Vaudreuil and his friends had promised, and the British watched the steady approach of the infernal machines with anxious eyes. The scene beggars description, those who saw it being least able to put their sensations into fitting words. Knox says "they were certainly the grandest fireworks that could possibly be conceived"—awful yet beautiful.<sup>1</sup> Again the French had reckoned without the British "sailor man." Across the flame-reflecting water rowed boat after boat straight for the burning death-dealing monsters. The tars, armed with grappling hooks got a grip of the vessels, and, heedless of their own peril, beached them all, leaving them, mere impotent demons, to fizzle away through the night.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, vol. i, p. 298.

**Point Levi.** French nerves had a very important bearing not only on the fireship stratagem but in other directions. Reports reached Vaudreuil and Montcalm that Wolfe's army was 20,000 strong and to meet such a force they concentrated every available man either behind the St. Charles-Montmorency works or in Quebec, to the neglect of vital spots elsewhere. One was the Point Levi where Montcalm would have placed three or four thousand men but for Vaudreuil's objections. Wolfe's survey showed him at once that if the headland could be secured, he would be able to inflict serious damage on Quebec, would at least divide command of the river at that point with the French batteries, and might induce Montcalm to make fresh dispositions from which everything might be hoped. Moreover Saunders was alive to the danger his fleet might run from an enemy posted on Point Levi.<sup>1</sup> On the 29th therefore Monckton's brigade and some Light Infantry were ferried across the river; they had a sharp bout with a body of Canadians and Indians, who took a dozen scalps and one prisoner. The prisoner was sent to Vaudreuil, and under cross-examination confirmed Vaudreuil's belief that Wolfe intended to attack Beauport. Promptly the Governor ordered the men still on Point Levi to cross the river to assist in the defence of the North Shore and the way was left for Wolfe to begin the construction of batteries at Pointe aux Pères just to the left of Levi. The work was carried on under a galling fire from Quebec. It is strange the French should have deluded themselves with the belief that Wolfe's guns would not carry into the town. They discovered their mistake, when on the 12th Wolfe fired

<sup>1</sup> Wright, p. 517.

a rocket as a signal to the forty guns and mortars<sup>1</sup> he had erected on Point Levi, to open the bombardment. Some days before the batteries were complete the citizens of Quebec waited upon Vaudreuil with a proposal that a volunteer force should attempt to re-take a position that ought never to have been abandoned. After some demur Vaudreuil assented. There were volunteers in plenty, including burghers, Indians, youths from the Seminary and regulars, the whole amounting to 1,400 or 1,500. They were to be led by one of Montcalm's officers, Captain Dumas. It was intended to make the attempt on the very night that the batteries opened, but after the expedition had started the booming and flash of the big guns suggested a postponement. The party returned to Quebec and waited another twenty-four hours.<sup>2</sup> Marching to Cap Rouge, the volunteers crossed the river and proceeded in two columns, which soon lost touch<sup>3</sup> towards the unsuspecting British encampment. What they would have accomplished if they had ever reached the neighbourhood of the batteries may be imagined from what actually happened. The first column, while still some three miles distant from Levi, were startled by a noise or movement of some sort in a wood, took fright, and retreated; as they doubled back they made the second column believe the British were upon them. The second column fired and the first had just enough spirit left to return the volley. Once more the nerves of self-appointed heroes proved unequal to the heroic test; M. Dumas

<sup>1</sup> Bradley: *Fight with France*, p. 303.

■ Doughty, vol. ii, p. 101. Parkman (*Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 225) dates the actual attempt the 12th.

■ Wood, p. 186.



found it impossible to restore order ; the men made for the boats with the precipitancy of hunted sheep, and by six o'clock in the morning were back in Quebec overwhelmed, says Parkman, with despair and shame. Within a couple of days, Quebec was crumbling up under the fierce storm ; the cathedral and other buildings were burnt out by bursting shells, many lives were lost, and the non-combatants found the place too hot for them.

Wolfe's  
energy.

All this was done under Wolfe's immediate direction ; yet he was not inactive elsewhere. He seemed not only " amphibious " but ubiquitous. At one moment he was with the men on the Island of Orleans, at another with those on the south of the St. Lawrence, at a third with Admiral Saunders. Body and brain rivalled each other in energy, despite his indifferent health. He sent an envoy under a flag of truce to Vaudreuil to tell him that the town would be attacked on behalf of His Britannic Majesty, but he hoped that the war would be carried on with humanity, and that the revolting practice of scalp-taking would not be permitted. If it were he would have no alternative but revenge. The appeal was fruitless, as were Amherst's efforts at Ticonderoga, to lessen the horrors of which the native allies of the French were guilty. To his troops Wolfe explained<sup>1</sup> that the object of the campaign was to complete the conquest of Canada and so finish the war in America ; he intended to carry on the operations with as little loss as possible, and expected his men to work cheerfully and without unsoldierlike complaint. Officers were warned against surprise and false alarms ; property was not to be destroyed without orders,

<sup>1</sup> Wright, p. 527-8.



and all persons remaining in their homes were to be treated humanely. "If violence be offered to a woman the offender shall be punished with death." Persons convicted of robbing officers' or soldiers' tents would be executed; there was to be no drunkenness or licentiousness, and if rum or spirits of any kind were needed by men who were wet or fatigued, the general would order the quantities he thought good for them. He would be as keen to reward distinguished service as to punish misconduct.

The great event which marked the interval between the seizure of Point Levi and the opening of the bombardment was the occupation of the heights to the east of the Montmorency. Unable either to put his original plan into execution or to get at the enemy from the water, Wolfe made careful study of the possibility of striking at him from lower down the north bank of the river. There had been much discussion on the French side as to the wisdom of an attack on the Orleans force, which was thought to have been seriously depleted in order to make the Levi position secure. But it was only one of many discussions of which discretion was the invariable concomitant. The strategy by which the heights east of Montmorency were seized was perfect. On the 9th Monckton began to move a considerable body of men up the river bank from Point Levi; simultaneously Saunders sent several vessels in near the north shore to open a furious fire upon the section of the works held by the Chevalier de Lévis near the Montmorency, and under cover of these feints 3,000 men under Murray and Townshend were got over during the night from the Island to the north shore. Wolfe himself led the way, and the movement was

The Mont-  
morency  
heights.

accomplished with very small loss, the only opposition being a party of Canadians and Indians who were driven off. In taking this step Wolfe hoped to draw Montcalm to a battle, or if not, then to get at him by a ford some way up the Montmorency. In any case from the heights of Montmorency he would be able to bombard Montcalm's left. He took risks, but unless he were to sit down and wait on the Island of Orleans whilst Monckton hammered away at Quebec, what was he to do but take risks? If we were to take Brigadier Townshend's view Wolfe placed himself in jeopardy and neglected the elementary precautions of good generalship.

Townshend's  
complaints.

What had happened to create the atmosphere which clearly now existed between the General and his second Brigadier? Had Townshend been too assertive for Wolfe's patience? Had he indulged too freely a gift for caricature which offended as often as it amused? It is said that on one occasion Townshend made Wolfe his victim at the dinner-table, and Wolfe, pocketing the caricature and the affront, said that if he lived this matter should be enquired into, but first they had to beat the enemy. The business in hand did not admit of the immediate adjustment of personal differences. Townshend's papers are full of complaints of Wolfe's proceedings. When Townshend landed on the north shore there was nothing to indicate the direction Wolfe had taken; he made a point of finding the baggage of the advance body unprotected in the meadows. He stayed to collect it and put a guard over it: which Wolfe probably considered unnecessary, particularly as it involved delay. Then Townshend complained that he was not given time to examine certain corpses and

he was dissatisfied with the position Wolfe occupied : he said that it placed their front to their friends on the Isle of Orleans, their right flank to the enemy and a ford between the Falls and the St. Lawrence, and exposed them to incursions of savages from woods to the rear and fords higher up the Montmorency.<sup>1</sup> On the face of it there would seem to be something in this point, and we learn from French memoirs<sup>2</sup> that the irregulars with Montcalm were eager to be led to the attack, but before anything could be done there was the inevitable council of war and nothing was done. In his anxiety Townshend fortified his camp, so that a night attack was provided against, and his biographer says that the breastworks were constructed in a way which showed Townshend to be far more advanced in his views than Wolfe himself. However that may be, Wolfe was not very complimentary when he saw what Townshend had done. He evidently thought that the Brigadier had gone beyond the requirements of the case, and said Townshend had indeed made himself secure for he had made a fortress.<sup>3</sup> Townshend's cup came near to overflowing when Wolfe removed two of his cannon "to grace the park of artillery the General chose to ornament his quarters with upon the descent of the hill," leaving "our whole right and front without any."<sup>4</sup> Wolfe even "rather laughed" at Townshend's apprehensions when he reported that an officer with an escort, who might be Montcalm, had been seen examining the British camp. Their

<sup>1</sup> *Military Life of Townshend*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, ii, pp. 227-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Townshend*, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

strained relations resulted a day or two later in a rebuff which Townshend himself records. Wolfe had left the camp at Montmorency to go over to Orleans without giving instructions. Townshend ran after him and caught him at the water's edge.

"He received me in a very stately manner, not advancing five steps. I told him that if I had suspected his intention of going over I had waited on him for his commands which I should be glad to receive and execute to his satisfaction. 'Sir,' says he, very drily, 'the Adjutant-General has my orders: permit me, Sir, to ask, are the troops to encamp now on their new ground, or not do it till the enemy's battery begins to play?'"

No word of Wolfe's exists to throw light on this purely personal matter, but it is clear that he had come to regard Townshend as a pretentious busybody, whatever his soldierlike qualities, and was determined that only the most formal official relations should subsist between them.

Sea-power  
in  
miniature.

Wolfe's forces were now divided into three sections: Montmorency, Orleans and Levi. His dispositions have been sharply criticised, and the French themselves at times talked of attempting to overwhelm him piecemeal. Parkman says: "The left wing of his army at Point Levi was six miles from the right wing at the cataract and Major Hardy's detachment on the Point of Orleans was between them separated from each by a wide arm of the St. Lawrence."<sup>1</sup> Colonel Townshend talks of Wolfe's "error in frittering away his forces."<sup>2</sup> Such a remark shows that Colonel Townshend entirely fails to grip either the situation or Wolfe's genius for utilising joint land and water opportunities. It is often said that

<sup>1</sup> Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Military Life of Townshend*, p. 181.

Saunders' part in the operations has been inadequately recognised. Here is surely a case in point. Wolfe had the fleet in the Quebec Basin as the connecting link between his three camps. In reality they were not divided at all, as a recent historian of the Empire points out. The Quebec Basin and its south, east and north-east shores formed Wolfe's camp. The river, "the best of all roads," enabled him, says Mr. Pollard, to move his men hither and thither at his ease.<sup>1</sup> It was indeed an object lesson in miniature in that sea-power which was being enforced so splendidly by Hawke and Boscawen and Rodney in European waters.

If Wolfe took risks, Montcalm took none. His instructions were to cling to Quebec, whatever else was surrendered, and he held to his works like a limpet. No ruse could tempt him from the position which he was confident the British could never take by assault, and Wolfe had reluctantly to abandon the idea of getting at him from the rear. But what Wolfe intended Montcalm never knew. Wolfe's own men did not know. He issued orders only to countermand them; his plans, so far as proclamation was concerned, were changed almost as soon as made. These changes coincided remarkably, says Mr. Doughty, with the escape of deserters,<sup>2</sup> from whom Montcalm learned little: "*Déserteurs, verbiage, aucune lumière*," was his significant comment.<sup>3</sup> Wolfe was capable of keeping his own counsel even to the mystification of his brigadiers. "Every step he takes is wholly his own. I'm told he asks

Montcalm  
not to be  
tempted.

<sup>1</sup> A. F. Pollard: *The British Empire*, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal du Marquis de Montcalm*, p. 584.

no one's opinion and wants no advice, and therefore as he conducts without an assistant the honour or . . . will be in proportion to his success."<sup>1</sup> The days went wearily by, and nothing was accomplished. "You may demolish Quebec," said a messenger from the French camp who had come in under a flag of truce. "You will never get inside it." "I will take Quebec if I stay here till November," replied Wolfe.

It was on the 18th July that an event happened which had an important bearing on the ultimate issue. Saunders tried an experiment. He sent the *Sutherland* with a frigate and some smaller vessels to test the possibility of getting up the river beyond Quebec. To the amazement of the French, the ships got through practically untouched, although Bougainville and others were quite certain that the batteries of Quebec would make any such attempt merely quixotic. But then Bougainville had spoken without thought that there might be British batteries at the Point Levi to lend invaluable assistance. On the following day a fleet of boats was dragged over Point Levi and launched above Quebec. Montcalm, unwilling though he was to part with men, was compelled forthwith to send a strong detachment to guard the shore between Quebec and Cap Rouge. The event was a surprise to both combatants. It has induced some wise-after-the-event commentators to ask why ships were not sent up the river at first? Major Wood supplies the answer. "The success of the experiment by no means proves that Wolfe should have gone straight past the town on his arrival. It would have been absurdly foolhardy to have run the

<sup>1</sup> James Gibson, quoted by Doughty, ii, p. 112.

gauntlet of a passage little more [or less (?)] than a mile wide with over 100 crowded ships.”<sup>1</sup> When once Wolfe had boats above Quebec and was able to move men on the river, he kept the French in a state of nervous anticipation. Carleton on the 20th took 600 men, according to Parkman,<sup>2</sup> 4,000 according to the French,<sup>3</sup> eighteen miles above Quebec, made a descent on Pointe aux Trembles in the hope of capturing persons and papers of importance, and decamped with a large number of ladies and a few men who had taken up their residence out of the din and danger from the batteries. Wolfe entertained the ladies at supper, talked to them pleasantly of the circumspection of their generals and expressed his surprise that they had not taken advantage of the favourable opportunities he gave them for attack. He offered to return the ladies safely to their friends if the Quebec batteries would allow a vessel conveying sick and wounded to pass the city. The compact was made and faithfully carried out, but the French said afterwards that Wolfe had seized the chance to get cattle and provisions, which they quite erroneously believed he needed, down the river also. A day or two later Vaudreuil did gain time to repair some damaged works by despatching an envoy to Wolfe with acknowledgments of his courtesy in another matter: Wolfe had sent into Quebec some cases of wine taken from a captured French vessel, and Vaudreuil asked the General and Saunders to do him the honour of accepting a few cases in return.

<sup>1</sup> Wood: p. 187.

■ *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 224.

■ Doughty, vol. ii, p. 113.



Sterner  
measures.

Wolfe began to feel that more extreme measures would have to be taken; the Canadians had not responded to his overtures, and he was especially incensed by the discovery that many of them fought in the disguise of Indians. There was a vigorous interchange of views between him and Montcalm regarding scalping and he issued a significant order strictly forbidding "the inhuman practice except when the enemy were Indians or Canadians dressed like Indians." In a new proclamation on the 25th July he said the Canadians had shown themselves unworthy of the offers he had made them; he had therefore issued orders that his troops should overrun their country, seize the inhabitants, and their flocks, and destroy whatever they should consider necessary. As, however, he was ashamed to go to the barbarous extremities of which the Canadians and their Indian allies had set the example, he proposed to defer his reprisals till the 10th August in the hope that the Canadians would submit. Whatever severities Wolfe's proclamations might suggest, it is certain that he never permitted any cruelty or hardship to be inflicted on the people who were at his mercy, unless he deemed harsh measures essential in the interests of his army. The French, whose privations were growing daily, and who saw the summer rapidly progressing with no prospect of harvesting their crops, became desperate and once more Vaudreuil determined to try the effect of fire-rafts. On the 27th no fewer than seventy-two were sent down the river *en masse*. It seemed impossible the ships could escape this time. Two were actually caught by the flames, which, however, were put out before much damage had been done. Once more the sailors came



to the rescue, cheerfully, as one of them said, taking Hell in tow. Wolfe did not consider that fire-ships were part of the game, and took strong measures to stop the nuisance. "If," he told Vaudreuil, "you presume to send down any more fire-rafts they shall be made fast to the two transports in which the Canadian prisoners are confined, in order that they may perish by your own base inventions." There were no more fire-ships.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MONTMORENCY REVERSE

How to  
get at  
Montcalm?

A MONTH of manœuvrings and bombardment, of skirmishings and reconnoitring, of excursions and alarums, and for all practical purposes Wolfe was as far off the capture of Quebec as on the day when he landed on the Island of Orleans. As day by day went by he became more and more impressed with the urgency of compelling Montcalm to come out and fight. As to the issue of a fair and square battle, he entertained not the slightest misgiving; he understood, as did Montcalm, that the troops behind the Beauport ramparts were no match in the open for his seasoned veterans. Quality and numbers were in inverse ratio. Wolfe had to think of Amherst and Pitt, as well as of his own and his army's reputation. But what could he do? Amherst was making no progress which served to draw off any of Montcalm's men. England, on the other hand, expected Wolfe to strike a blow which would assist Amherst's movements, and he found himself engaged in a more or less futile interchange of shot and shell with the enemy. The examination of the river above Quebec had not appeared to offer much more prospect of getting at the city from that direction than did the fords up the Montmorency and the wooded country to Montcalm's rear. Montcalm shared his view about the St. Lawrence, and from the force which Wolfe could bring to bear on the Montmorency side he anticipated no serious attack. To do nothing was,

however, to Wolfe intolerable, and if to do something involved frightful odds, the odds must be given.

There was more than usual stir in the British ranks on the 29th and 30th July. Precisely what was intended only Wolfe and Saunders, and perhaps the Brigadiers, knew. Wolfe had decided to try to pierce the left of the French defences near the Montmorency held by the Chevalier de Lévis. If the idea was desperate it was also resourceful and was based on the most minute study of the physical conditions which so far had been possible. The attack was to be partly by land, partly by water. Between the cliffs behind which Montcalm had thrown up his entrenchments and the water's edge at high tide is a stretch of shore some 200 yards wide. When the tide is out there is exposed a stretch of oozy gully-riven mud. A redoubt had been built on the shore just above the high-water mark, but its exact distance from the entrenchments Wolfe had never been able to ascertain. A second redoubt stood nearer the Falls. These posts would make any attempt to land a matter of extreme peril. Even after they had been disposed of there was the strand to be crossed under point blank fire from the shelter of the works on the cliff. At low water the Montmorency below the Falls was easily fordable, and Wolfe's plan was to run in on the high tide a couple of armed flat-bottomed transports, called catts, as near the first redoubt as the range permitted, to get the *Centurion* carrying sixty guns in a position near the Falls from which to bombard the batteries and the redoubt on the French left, whilst a powerful battery in the English camp played upon them from across the Montmorency. At low tide the catts would be aground and able to assist the

The  
Beauport  
shore.

landing of the troops which Wolfe intended himself to direct; whilst Townshend with a couple of thousand men would move across the ford beneath the Falls. A preliminary movement of Townshend's up the Montmorency was made to suggest that a simultaneous attack would be delivered to the north, and activity on the southern shore was to render uncertainty doubly uncertain.

July 31st.

By 10 o'clock on the morning of the 31st Wolfe was afloat with several regiments from both Points Levi and Orleans; the *catts* and the *Centurion* took up their allotted places, and fire was opened from the Levi and Montmorency batteries, as well as from the vessels. Wolfe, nearer the French lines than he had ever been, saw that the redoubts were commanded by the French batteries and realised more strongly than had been possible hitherto the character of the undertaking. Some students of that historic day have thought that his object was perhaps little more than what is euphemistically called a reconnaissance in force, but no one who reads his despatch to Pitt<sup>1</sup> can doubt that his intention at starting was to attack the French entrenchments. Otherwise, from the nature of the enterprise, there would be much to be said in favour of Mr. Bradley's view that the General, having inspected the position, would do little more than make a demonstration on the water.<sup>2</sup> As the day proceeded, Montcalm for once thought the occasion demanded outside action on his part, and actually ordered a detachment to cross the up river fords to take Townshend's men in the rear. The movement was noticed by Wolfe, and he promptly signalled to the Point Levi that some men should be

<sup>1</sup> Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> *Wolfe*, p. 166.

sent westward along the south shore ; the effect of this counter move was instantaneous, and Montcalm's resolution failed him. The fact that Wolfe did not strike at once but moved his boats, laden with eager soldiery, for hours up and down the river to the greater bewilderment of the enemy seems to have encouraged the idea that he hesitated. It was a hot July day, the air was heavy with electricity, and the trial to both British and French was severe. "The cause of the delay is not apparent," says Mr. Doughty<sup>1</sup> ; "the attempt after long and close inspection, seemed too desperate to be justifiable," says Mr. Bradley.<sup>2</sup> The explanation surely is that the two catts had to go in at high tide in order to ground as near the redoubts as possible at low tide, and that until low tide the Montmorency ford was impracticable. To land the troops at high tide was out of the question ; yet to secure the assistance of the catts, operations must begin at high tide ; the plan was ingenious and Wolfe had Saunders' cordial co-operation.

"At a proper time of the tide," Wolfe signalled to the Brigadiers to make a forward move, though what that proper time was I cannot determine. Mr. Doughty<sup>3</sup> and Major Wood<sup>4</sup> say it was "past three" ; Mr. Bradley, that "it was past four o'clock before Wolfe made up his mind" ;<sup>5</sup> Parkman, that the crisis came at half-past five.<sup>6</sup> Having delayed so long it was vital now that every movement should be executed with smartness and in good order. Wolfe's calculations were to be upset this day by a check when he wanted to advance, and by a precipitate

The first  
embarrass-  
ment.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Wolfe*, p. 167

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> *Wolfe*, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 240.

rush forward when there should have been deliberation. The boats suddenly struck a shoal, from which they were got off with some difficulty ; Wolfe made a considerable point of the delay thus caused, and was at first inclined to lay blame on the sailors who should have saved him from his temporary embarrassment. The accident was the more grievous seeing that Saunders was present in person doing his best to make the operations a success.<sup>1</sup> Having got clear of the obstacle and found a place to land, Wolfe going in first with some naval officers to make sure this time, the Grenadiers were put on shore, followed by the Royal Americans ; the Grenadiers were to form up in four distinct bodies, and with the support of Monckton's Brigade in their rear, and of Townshend and Murray now moving across the Ford, were to lead the attack on the redoubt.

The  
Grenadiers'   
wild dash.

What possessed the Grenadiers at that critical moment ? They were Wolfe's veterans on whose discipline he would have staked all. Yet like a trusted high mettled horse, who for once in his life takes the bit between his teeth, the Grenadiers, without waiting for orders, dashed wildly forward ; whether they thought they had orders one cannot tell ; whatever the explanation, "they made one of those unaccountable blunders that will sometimes happen with the best troops in the heat of action."<sup>2</sup> They went straight for the redoubt which the French abandoned, but as it was open at the rear, it could not be used as a support for the attack on the entrenchments.<sup>3</sup> For a moment they were checked by a terrific fusillade ; and then, away they went again as though they imagined alone they could carry the

<sup>1</sup> Wood, p. 193,

■ *Ibid.*

\* *Ibid.*

enemy's works. Heavy clouds had been collecting, and now to the thunder of cannon and crack of musket was added the thunder of the elements. A storm burst, and the rain destroyed any sort of foothold the Grenadiers might have found in their wild attempt to reach the heights behind which lay thousands of well protected Frenchmen, Canadians and Indians. The Grenadiers who started on that mad heroic rush were 1,000 strong ; they were not stopped till nearly half their number lay dead or wounded on the ground between the redoubt and the entrenchments. Some French writers have argued that the storm saved Montcalm ; others that it saved Wolfe. English authorities are equally divided. If the Grenadiers had ever reached the French lines their chances were as twenty to one. After what had happened, Wolfe saw there was nothing for it but to call them back. Townshend's advance was stayed by signal, and as the tide was turning, the General ordered the men into the boats. Four hundred and fifty gallant fellows lay stretched on the shore ; Indians in large numbers burst out from the woods with scalping knives to do their hideous work ; the 78th Highlanders were sent forward to bring off as many of the wounded as they could find ; there were many acts of individual devotion, which a century later would have commanded the Victoria Cross,<sup>1</sup> and the French in at least one instance showed a humanity which was not always forthcoming on either side.

<sup>1</sup> The thrilling oft-told story of Ensign Peyton's refusal to leave Captain Ochterloney who lay wounded and at the mercy of the first tomahawk, forms Chapter VII of Mr. Doughty's 2nd volume.

Wolfe's  
comments.

Wolfe got his army back into the boats, together with the wounded who had been rescued, and Townshend's men retreated in perfect order, waving their hats in defiance at the enemy on the heights, who even at this critical moment dare not come out and fight. As the various regiments made their way to their quarters in the three camps, Wolfe's ruminations were bitter as the exhilaration in the French lines was excessive. Vaudreuil boasted and hoped that M. Wolfe would repeat his mad enterprise. "I have no more anxiety about Quebec," he wrote.<sup>1</sup> Wolfe's critics in his own camps were not sparing, though naturally they took care to confine their views to private papers, but the General himself promptly made his own thoughts public. He issued orders in which he expressed the hope that the check which the Grenadiers had met with would be a lesson to them: "Such impetuous, irregular, and unsoldier-like proceedings destroy all order, make it impossible for their commanders to form any disposition for an attack, and put it out of the General's power to execute his plan. The Grenadiers could not suppose that they alone could beat the French army, and therefore it was necessary that the corps under Brigadier Monckton and Brigadier Townshend should have time to join, that the attack might be general; the very first fire of the enemy was sufficient to repulse men who had lost all sense of order and military discipline; Amherst's and the Highland regiments alone by the soldier-like and cool manner they were formed in, would undoubtedly have beat back the whole Canadian army, if they had ventured to attack them. The loss, however, is inconsiderable, and may

<sup>1</sup> Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 243.



be easily repaired when a favourable opportunity offers, if the men will show a proper attention to their officers."

These reflections were described by one chronicler of the campaign as "a cruel aspersion" on the Grenadiers, and an officer of "knowledge, fortune and interest"—it sounds curiously like Townshend—was heard to say that "the attack then and there was contrary to the advice and opinion of every officer." Townshend's biographer says that "the confidence of the troops in Wolfe was much shaken by this disaster. For nothing in war is so bad as failure and defeat:" a statement which every incident in the remainder of the campaign flatly contradicts, unless we are to accept the few malcontents in Wolfe's camps as wholly trustworthy witnesses. Colonel Townshend does not believe that the men advanced in spite of orders. "I feel convinced that the cause of this disaster as in so many other cases was a burning thirst for battle on the part of the troops, officers and men alike, such as one sees in men who, never having been on active service before, are impatient to find themselves engaged";<sup>1</sup> in other words Colonel Townshend confirms the impression left by Wolfe's own words that splendid veterans on this occasion acted like raw troops eager to show their spirit and courage. Wolfe loved his Grenadiers, and his rebuke was based on immediate observation; his critics spoke at second-hand. The General was at special pains to show that he considered the officers free from blame: he visited personally during the night every wounded officer and invited the survivors

The  
Townshend  
view.

<sup>1</sup> *Military Life of Townshend*, p. 196,

The part  
of the  
fleet.

to dine with him.<sup>1</sup> The morale of the men themselves was in no way destroyed by their mistake and its heavy punishment. "The survivors re-formed at once, the discipline which had been lost for those few fatal minutes was restored, and the next day all ranks were as fit for service as ever."<sup>2</sup> That day Wolfe wrote to Monckton: "This check must not dishearten us: prepare for another and better attempt."<sup>3</sup>

Why Wolfe combined a land and sea attack is not plain to Colonel Townshend,<sup>4</sup> nor to Mr. Doughty, who sees "disadvantages in union," when Wolfe might have confined himself to a land attack and used his boats to distract the enemy's right.<sup>5</sup> What they see a century and a half after the event Wolfe saw directly experience had proved theory to be misleading. A long letter to Saunders makes this point quite clear. Before sending his despatch of the 2nd September to Pitt,<sup>6</sup> Wolfe submitted it to his naval colleague. Something in that despatch referring to the part played by the navy in the attempt on Montmorency was not approved by Saunders and Wolfe promptly struck it out. From his reply to the Admiral we get an excellent insight into Wolfe's thoughts concerning the whole business: "I am," he said, "sensible of my own errors in the course of the campaign; see clearly wherein I have been deficient; and think a little more or less blame to a man that must necessarily be ruined, of little or no consequence." He denied that he attributed all his difficulties to the two catt's not being so placed as "to

<sup>1</sup> Bradley: *Wolfe*, pp. 170-1.

<sup>2</sup> Wood, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*: Monckton.

<sup>4</sup> p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. ii, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix I.

annoy the two small batteries with their guns"; on the contrary, they did all that could be expected, and yet "the upper battery was not abandoned by the enemy but continued firing till the Grenadiers ran like blockheads up to it." It seems that Captain James Cook, the navigator, who was one of Saunders' Captains, believed he could get within forty or fifty yards of the redoubts, and Wolfe would have been satisfied with 150 or 200 yards if the upper redoubt had been as far from the entrenchments as it appeared to be from the British camp. From the lower redoubt so brisk a fire was kept up that Wolfe himself had a narrow escape. "I was no less than three times struck with splinters, and had my stick knocked out of my hand with a cannon-ball." The blame of "that unlucky day" he took entirely upon his own shoulders. "Accidents cannot be helped. As much as the plan was defective falls justly upon me," and it was of no great consequence whether the catts fired ill or well, lost time in landing or not. "In none of these circumstances the essential matter resides. The great fault of that day consists in putting too many men in the boats, who might have been landed the day before, and might have crossed the ford with certainty while a small body remained afloat and the superfluous boats of the fleet employed in a feint that might have divided the enemy's force. A man sees his errors often too late to remedy." If Wolfe's plan had been ideal the action of the Grenadiers would have thrown it completely out of gear.

Wolfe now thought of trying to get into touch with Amherst, or at any rate to open a way which might make communication possible in the near future. Whilst the French fleet was in the river between

Murray's  
operations.

Quebec and Montreal no such communication was possible. General Murray, therefore, with 1,200 men was ordered to join Admiral Holmes up the river ; they were to get at and destroy the French ships, if possible, and Murray was to invite Bougainville to battle by attacking French posts whenever it could be done on "tolerable terms." The ships could not be got at and Murray made two attempts to land at Pointe aux Trembles which were repulsed with the loss of some eighty men, but he outwitted Bougainville at Deschambault, where he landed, destroyed valuable stores of ammunition, clothing and other necessities, secured some useful papers and prisoners, and was back in the boats before Bougainville could reach the spot in force. Murray's operations had the effect of compelling Montcalm to detach as many as 1,600 to act under Bougainville, and his failure at Pointe aux Trembles brought some compensation by inducing the belief that the more difficult heights nearer the city were at any rate secure. The French conceived more than one enterprising project by way of turning the tables on Holmes and Murray, but for various reasons they did nothing. Bougainville thought of crossing to the south bank and attacking Murray's camp, but bad weather was a sufficient excuse for delay. Another officer was prepared to make an attack on one of Holmes' ships, but jealousy intervened, and before anything could be done Saunders had sent up reinforcements. It was on the 5th August that Murray started up the river ; he was away nearly three weeks, much to Wolfe's annoyance. "By his long stay above and detaining all our boats Murray is actually master of the operations, or rather puts an entire stop to them," said the General, and on the

24th rockets were sent up to show Holmes that something was wanted.

Both armies were feeling the strain ; in the French camp there was scarcity of food and of ammunition ; in the British there was much sickness. The French loss during the operations had not been many more than half that of the British—so that the numerical disproportion of the forces was greater than ever. All told, Wolfe had lost over 800 men. But the state of his army was in every way superior to that which Montcalm and Vaudreuil controlled. Among the French, discontent was rampant and desertions numerous. The Canadians saw a plentiful harvest being wasted whilst they were on duty behind Montcalm's earthworks ; a wasted harvest meant privation and ruin when the campaign was over. Wolfe continued to lay the country bare, torches were placed beneath homesteads whose owners refused to be neutral, and the crops which the Canadian hoped to garner for himself were appropriated by the British. Some barbarous things were done in carrying out Wolfe's orders, notably by a brother of the Richard Montgomery who died in the attempt to take Quebec during the War of Independence. Montgomery had prisoners killed in cold blood. There were some signal deeds of heroism, too, such as the holding at bay by a sergeant and a dozen men of 100 Canadians and Indians for two hours till relief came. Wolfe was quick to reward any special act of this sort, and instantly gave, or promised to give, the sergeant a commission. When the luckless habitant applied to Vaudreuil to know what he should do he was urged to fight for his country more energetically than ever because the English would disappear with the end of

Laying the  
country  
waste.

August. Poor wretch : if he fought, Wolfe punished him ; if he failed to fight he was treated as a traitor by his own people. And the assurances that the British were defeated and maintaining a hopeless struggle carried as little weight with him as with the Indians, who began to lose confidence and said they would believe that the French had triumphed when the English were driven back to their ships. " Are they not as unconcerned in their camps as if nothing had happened ? " Vaudreuil and Montcalm were encouraged by the reports of deserters that the British fleet would shortly sail and that Wolfe contemplated breaking up his camps. News reached Quebec early in the month that Amherst had captured Ticonderoga, and that Niagara also had fallen. But Bourlamaque wrote that he had taken up an impregnable position at Isle aux Noix,<sup>1</sup> and from the capture of two officers carrying despatches from Amherst to Wolfe Montcalm learned that Amherst's operations would depend upon the success Wolfe met with at Quebec. ■

Wolfe  
breaks  
down.

Wolfe's health was a sore trial during this month of August. The Montmorency failure told upon him more than he cared perhaps to admit. He was haunted by the feeling that he would not accomplish what Pitt expected of him, and he loathed the thought of returning to England to hear the criticisms of the ignorant. When Townshend wrote to his wife, " General Wolfe's health is but very bad : his generalship in my poor opinion is not a bit better,"<sup>3</sup> he was only saying what a good many others were either thinking or preparing to think. About the 18th or

<sup>1</sup> Parkman : Vol. ii, p. 276.

■ Doughty : Vol. ii, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Military Life of Townshend*, p. 210.

19th August Wolfe began to be seriously ill ; by the 20th he was prostrate with fever, and for a day or two it was a question whether he would be fit to resume the command. Knox wrote on the 22nd that it was with the greatest concern the army learned of "our amiable general being very ill of a slow fever. The soldiers lament him exceedingly and seemed apprehensive of this even before we were ascertained of it by his not visiting the camp for several days." He was, as we have seen, sufficiently recovered by the 24th to interest himself in Murray's return, and on the 25th Knox noted that "General Wolfe is on the recovery to the inconceivable joy of the whole army"—a sufficient commentary on the suggestion that a single reverse had cost Wolfe his popularity with the rank and file.

Ill as he had been Wolfe's thoughts were all for the public service. He told his doctor that he knew he could not cure his complaint but begged to be patched up so that he might be without pain for a few days and able to do his duty. "That is all I want." As he lay helpless on his bed he fretted at his inability to urge matters forward to a definite issue ; every day brought him appreciably nearer the season when it would be possible to do nothing. He had already in his mind the idea of taking up winter quarters on the Isle aux Coudres, though that was a prospect little more inviting than absolute failure. For the first time, therefore, he called upon his Brigadiers "to meet and consult for the public utility and advantage."<sup>1</sup> How best could the enemy be attacked ?

The  
brigadiers  
consult.

<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Casgrain says (*Wolfe and Montcalm*, p. 154) that Wolfe "handed the command over to the three Brigadiers"; he did nothing of the sort.



Defeat of the French army, he concluded, would mean the immediate surrender of the town, badly provisioned as it was. He suggested for their consideration three methods all turning on the Beauport entrenchments, from either the rear or the shore or both in combination. The Brigadier's reply to this invitation was responsible for a controversy in the mists of which the great achievement which was the outcome has sometimes been obscured. Recently published papers enable one to form a judicial and final opinion on the merits of the case. "The natural strength of the enemy's situation between the Rivers St. Charles and Montmorency now improved by the art of their engineers makes the defeat of their army, if attacked there, very doubtful," wrote the Brigadiers. "Late experience" made them shy of repeating the attack of the 31st July. They pointed out that if Montcalm were defeated, he would still have it in his power to dispute the passage of the St. Charles. "We are therefore of opinion that the most probable method of striking an effectual blow is by bringing the troops to the south shore and directing our operations above the town. When we have established ourselves on the north shore, of which there is very little doubt, the Marquis de Montcalm must fight us on our own terms; we are between him and his provisions, and betwixt him and the French army opposing General Amherst. If he gives us battle and we defeat him, Quebec must be ours and what is more all Canada must submit to his Majesty's arms, a different case from any advantage we can hope for at Beauport." On the question of an immediate attack, or a postponement till the ruin of the harvest had completed the ruin of the Colony, "or with a view of facilitating



the operations of our armies now advancing into the heart of the country," the Brigadiers could not take upon themselves to advise, "although we cannot but be convinced that a decisive affair to our disadvantage must enable the enemy to make head against the army under the command of General Amherst already far advanced by the diversion this army has made on this side." The Brigadiers proposed a plan, but with the same dip of ink cast doubts on the expediency of carrying it out. If they had been men of less grit and less worthy soldiers, one might be forced to unpleasant conclusions.

Townshend's friends, somehow, have managed to fix all the credit for the plan on himself. Martin<sup>1</sup> and Warburton,<sup>2</sup> sixty years ago, like Colonel Townshend six years ago, treated the matter as conclusive. "After having maturely deliberated, the brigadiers agreed," says Warburton, "in recommending the remarkable plan which Wolfe unreservedly adopted. The merit of this daring and skilful proposition belongs to Colonel George Townshend, although long disputed or withheld by jealousy or political hostility." To that statement Wolfe's own words<sup>3</sup> would lend some colour if the facts were not now placed beyond dispute. To Townshend probably belongs an even smaller part of "the merit" than to the other Brigadiers, and Miss Kimball says it is doubtful if Townshend did not protest against the plan as too hazardous.<sup>4</sup> It remained only for Colonel C. V. F. Townshend to clench the errors of other

Townshend's  
part

<sup>1</sup> Martin's *British Colonies*, Div. I, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Conquest of Canada*, vol. ii, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix: "I have acquiesced in their proposal."

<sup>4</sup> *Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. ii, p. 164.

writers by giving "the plan of operations which was adopted in consequence of the Brigadier's answer"—the plan which was not that eventually carried out by Wolfe at all—and to append an extract from a letter by Wolfe to Townshend which he assumed belonged to the plan as drawn up, but which had nothing to do with it. Colonel Townshend got his papers muddled and fell into a trap of his own making.<sup>1</sup> He says in his preface: "It will be seen that the unexpected and surprising manner in which Quebec was taken was the plan of the Brigadiers and not of Wolfe. That Wolfe put into happy execution the plan of others is no disparagement to his glorious happy memory—such things are not unknown to students of military history."

Wolfe's  
prompt  
action.

The Brigadiers' reply was dated the 29th August. Their views were a reversion to Wolfe's earlier idea, mentioned in his despatch to Pitt, of carrying the operations up the river, an idea which he abandoned because the formidable nature of the cliffs, the ease with which they could be defended by a handful of men against an army, and the difficulties of getting men and supplies past Quebec seemed to make the task more hopeless than an attack on the Beauport lines. "My ill state of health hinders me from executing my own plan," said Wolfe to Saunders on the 30th; "it is of too desperate a nature to order others to execute. The generals seem to think alike as to the operations; I therefore join with them, and perhaps we may find some opportunity to strike a blow." His decision taken, he began to give effect to it with a spirit which was in striking contrast with the hesitancy of the Brigadiers' last words, and within

<sup>1</sup> Doughty: vol. ii, p. 243.

twenty-four hours he had told Saunders that it would be necessary "to run as many small craft by the town as possible with provisions and rum for six weeks for about 5,000, which is all I intend to take."

In the midst of his preparations he wrote to his mother. It was the last letter she had from him, and it is as significant on account of what it omits as of what it says.

Last letter  
to his  
mother.

"BANKS OF THE ST. LAWRENCE,

"31st August, 1759.

"DEAR MADAM,—

"My writing to you will convince you that no personal evils worse than defeats and disappointments have fallen upon me. The enemy puts nothing to risk and I can't, in conscience, put the whole army to risk. My antagonist has wisely shut himself up in inaccessible entrenchments, so that I can't get at him without spilling a torrent of blood, and that perhaps to little purpose. The Marquis de Montcalm is at the head of a great number of bad soldiers, and I am at the head of a small number of good ones, that wish for nothing so much as to fight him; but the wary old fellow avoids an action, doubtful of the behaviour of his army. People must be of the profession to understand the disadvantages and difficulties we labour under, arising from the uncommon natural strength of the country.

"I approve entirely of my father's disposition of his affairs, though perhaps it may interfere a little with my plan of quitting the service, which I am determined to do the first opportunity—I mean so as not to be absolutely distressed in circumstances, nor burdensome to you or anybody else. I wish you much health and am, dear Madam,

"Your obedient and affectionate son,

"JAM: WOLFE.

"If any sums of money are paid to you of what is due to my father from Government, let me recommend you not to meddle with the funds, but keep it for your support until better times."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

Removing  
a camp.

WOLFE's first business was to get his men safely away from Montmorency: the task was a supremely difficult and delicate one. It would provide the French with an opportunity for mischief for which they had been on the look-out during several weeks. Knox as early as the 5th August recorded in his journal: "Scarce a day passes but we hear of some brilliant coup which the French intend to strike at one or other of our three encampments. Now we are told by deserters that they will wait until General Wolfe is obliged to withdraw his troops from the north camp—then fall on him with their whole force and cut the flower of his army to pieces." Wolfe was here as elsewhere more than a match for his wily and cautious opponent. The transference was accomplished by tactics which completely deceived Montcalm as to their real purpose. Montcalm early discovered that some great movement was afoot, but the movement was chiefly upon the water and the south shore. Preparations were being made obviously for a new attack, but whether the attack was to be on the Beauport lines or on the other side of Quebec he had no means of discovering. There was a great demonstration by boats, the Point Levi batteries kept up a ceaseless fire, and the signs were all in favour of something happening very different from the thing that did happen. As the boats stood in to the Montmorency shore, the enemy's belief that the

men of a new attacking force were to be taken off grew, and in their anxiety to be ready at all points they missed the chance of delivering a blow that must have been heavy. Early in the morning of the 3rd September, the whole Montmorency camp was transferred without the loss of a single man.

What the French felt as they watched the boats with a well-timed movement withdraw instead of advance may be gleaned from French journals and letters. Montcalm was blamed, and all he and his officers could say in justification was that they detected 2,000 men lying on their faces in the British entrenchments at the very moment that they were supposed to have crossed over to the Island of Orleans. "There was danger of falling into some snare,"<sup>1</sup> they said. Wolfe next removed all save 600 men, whom he left under Carleton, from the Island to the south shore ; 1,600 men were left on Point Levi under Colonel Burton, and the rest, as far as could be by night, marched in detachments under Monckton, Murray, and Townshend to spots where boats were waiting to carry them to the ships between Sillery and Cap Rouge. Wolfe joined the fleet up the river on the 5th, and Admiral Holmes began to "amuse" the enemy by sailing his vessels backwards and forwards. Montcalm had sent de Lévis to Montreal with reinforcements in view of Amherst's advance ; he strengthened Bougainville and held himself in readiness to go to any point at any moment danger threatened. He shifted his main camp from the Montmorency to La Canardiere much nearer Quebec, and was prepared for the appearance of Wolfe at Cap Rouge or higher up, or on the Beauport shore.

Amusing  
the enemy.

<sup>1</sup> Doughty : vol. ii, p. 264.

How many men Wolfe had transferred above Quebec there was nothing to indicate, a clever show of strength being maintained in both the camps across the water. Montcalm dared not reduce the numbers already depleted by the detachments given to de Lévis and Bougainville, and he was confident that the latter could meet any force that might attempt a landing anywhere between Quebec and Pointe aux Trembles. That the attempt if made would be between Cap Rouge and Pointe aux Trembles, in accordance with the plan of the Brigadiers, was the opinion of Montcalm. The one man who had other views was Wolfe. Montcalm ought to have known by this time that the British General never did the obvious thing, and the more attention Wolfe paid to a particular stretch of coast the less likely was he to strike there.

A respite  
and some  
doubts.

Wolfe conferred with the Brigadiers on the 7th as to the best method of attack; the next day the Brigadiers reconnoitred and proposed to land at Pointe aux Trembles<sup>1</sup> on the 9th. The plan, if it was entertained, was defeated by a heavy storm, which lasted over two days, during which operations were suspended. The men cooped up in the transports were suffering from their confinement and Wolfe sent half the number on shore to refresh themselves and stretch their limbs. He took advantage of the respite himself to write a long letter to the Earl of Holderness, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department. Some points in his letter, which was dated "The *Sutherland* at Anchor off Cape Rouge, September 9, 1759," are an interesting supplement to the despatch sent a week earlier to Pitt.<sup>2</sup> If

<sup>1</sup> Wood, p. 215.

■ Appendix I.

Montcalm had shut himself up in Quebec, Wolfe said, it would have been long since captured. He described the Canadians as "extremely dissatisfied but, curbed by the force of the Government and terrified by the savages that are posted round about them, they are obliged to keep together to work and man the entrenchments." Referring to the French vessels which got up the river before Admiral Durell arrived, and were now out of the reach of the British men-of-war, he said : "These ships serve a double purpose ; they are magazines for their provisions and at the same time cut off all communication between General Amherst's army and the corps under my command, so that we are not able to make any detachment to attack Montreal or favour the junction or by attacking the fort of Chambly or Boulemarque's Corps behind open the General's way into Canada." He paid a compliment to the unceasing hard work which his "poor soldiery" had done without murmuring ; he indicated the nightly risks they ran from surprise and murder, and the difficulties of the ships during "the most violent ebb tide when they often drag their anchors by the mere force of the current. Our fleet blocks up the river above and below the town, but can give no manner of aid in an attack on the Canadian army.<sup>1</sup> We are now here with about 3,600 men waiting an opportunity to attack them when and wherever they can best be got at. The weather has been extremely unfavourable for a day or two, so that we have been inactive. I am so far recovered

<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Casgrain (*Wolfe and Montcalm*, p. 167) says : "It is curious that Wolfe should state that the fleet could give no manner of aid in an attack on Quebec." Wolfe obviously meant that the ships could not get at the enemy ; he did not intend to imply that the naval forces were useless.



as to do business, but my situation is entirely ruined without the consolation of having done any considerable service to the State or without any prospect of it." Touches always of doubt—touches which throw the event now so near into more dramatic relief.

The Anse  
au Foulon.

When the stormy conditions passed, and everyone anticipated that the critical hour had arrived, the General did more reconnoitring. With Admiral Holmes and certain officers, all dressed as Grenadiers, he dropped down the river, examining every inch of the cliff with keen eye as he went, and ultimately took up his position on the south shore opposite the Anse au Foulon. By whom Wolfe's attention was originally drawn to this particular cove, or whether its advantages over others were detected by the General himself, is matter of speculation. Credit is generally given to one Major Stobo, a Scotch officer who was one of Washington's hostages after Fort Necessity; Stobo, taken to Quebec, gave his parole, broke it and escaped to convey information to the British at Louisbourg. Biographers of Washington refer to Stobo as though there were no question as to Wolfe's indebtedness to him; but Stobo has been associated on the strength of his own representations with much in which he had no hand. Mr. Doughty, for instance, has disproved his claim to have been one of the heroes with Wolfe in the final attack; he left the St. Lawrence on the 7th September nearly a week before the event.<sup>1</sup> The essential fact is that twenty-four hours after the Brigadiers imagined that the assault was to be made on the enemy's position many miles higher up river, Wolfe was studying the spot within two miles of Quebec which ever since has been

<sup>1</sup> *The Siege of Quebec*, vol. ii, p. 114.



known as Wolfe's Cove. Information must have reached him that whilst Montcalm, Vaudreuil, and Bougainville were running hither and thither in order not to be taken unawares either above Cap Rouge or below Quebec, the Anse au Foulon was weakly held by an officer named Vergor who had already proved his worthlessness if not his actual treachery. There is hardly a movement at this juncture which is not the occasion of controversy. Major Wood and others say that it was by Vaudreuil's own orders that Vergor was allowed to hold the post ; the Abbé Casgrain says that Bougainville's action in placing it in the hands of such a man was unpardonable.<sup>1</sup> Then Vergor should have been supported by the Guyenne Regiment which Montcalm had allotted for that purpose, but the Regiment was elsewhere. Vergor had allowed most of his men to go to their farms on the understanding that they should look after his own : it is suggested that he trusted to the Guyenne Regiment in the event of any attempt being made.

Whatever the explanation Wolfe discovered how weak the defence was at this point, and for the next two days the apparent preparations for a landing in the direction of Pointe aux Trembles and at Beauport kept the French on the alert at both ends. Montcalm urged Bougainville to watch every movement of the enemy afloat, and to take every possible precaution against surprise. For a week or more the state of Montcalm's mind was reflected in one sentence. " Il est certain que la conduite<sup>des</sup> des ennemis est aussi embarrassante qu'équivoque." If any information of Wolfe's intentions reached Montcalm it was to the

Orders and intentions.

<sup>1</sup> *Wolfe and Montcalm*, p. 178.

effect, as Admiral Holmes wrote after the battle, that a plan to land four leagues above the town was afoot. Wolfe as usual kept his own counsel : he did not, it is generally agreed, say a word to his Brigadiers as to the decision he had taken ; they seem to have learned no more than was contained in the General Orders issued on the 11th—orders which went into detail on every point except as to the spot at which the attack was to be made. Nor was it even mentioned in further orders on the 12th.<sup>1</sup> “ The troops will land where the French seem least to expect it. The first body that gets on shore is to march directly to the enemy and drive them from any little post they may occupy. The battalions must form on the upper ground and be ready to charge whatever presents itself. The officers and men will remember what their country expects of them.” The Brigadiers were only less in the dark than the French themselves. Late on the 12th all three wrote to ask Wolfe to give them more explicit instructions for the operations which were to take place in a few hours’ time. “ We must beg leave to request of you as distinct Orders as the nature of the thing will admit of, particularly of the place or places we are to attack. This circumstance (perhaps very decisive) we cannot learn from the public orders, neither may it be in the power of the naval officer who leads the Troops to instruct us.”

Wolfe and  
his  
brigadiers.

And these were the Brigadiers whose plan Wolfe is supposed to have adopted : this was the plan whose “ unexpected and surprising character,” Warburton and Townshend said, was the Brigadiers’ and not Wolfe’s ; this was “ the daring and skilful proposition”

<sup>1</sup> Wood, p. 221.

of which the "merit" belonged to George Townshend. Could confession of ignorance be more absolute? Wolfe's answer was to the effect that the attack would be at the Foulon about two miles from Quebec. But he reminded the Brigadiers that it was not usual in public orders to indicate the direct spot of an attack "nor for any inferior officers not charged with a particular duty to ask instructions on that point." To the best of his knowledge and abilities he had fixed upon that spot where they could act with the most force and were most likely to succeed. "If I am mistaken I am sorry for it and must be answerable to his Majesty and the public for the consequence." Mr. Doughty says that "Wolfe's sudden rejection of the plan of the Brigadiers after all the details had been arranged naturally caused a feeling of resentment at the moment and protests were made. This may be the reason why Wolfe did not disclose his plan more fully to his officers at the time."<sup>1</sup> It is a remarkable fact that what Wolfe kept from his Brigadiers he communicated to Colonel Burton commanding Webb's Regiment at Point Levi on the 10th September—

"Sixteen hundred of our men are upon the south shore to clean and refresh themselves and their transports; and indeed to save the whole army which must have perished if they had continued forty-eight hours longer on board. To-morrow the troops re-embark, the fleet sails up the river a little higher, as if intending to land above upon the north shore, keeping a convenient distance for the boats and armed vessels to fall down to the Foulon; and we count (if no accident of weather or other prevents) to make a powerful effort at that spot about four in the morning of the 13th. At ten or eleven or twelve at night, sooner or later as it may be necessary, on Wednesday the 12th, we get into our boats. If we are forced to alter these measures you shall know it;

<sup>1</sup> *The Siege of Quebec*, vol. ii, p. 248.

if not it stands fixed : be you careful not to drop it to any, for fear of desertion, and it would not be amiss for Carleton to pass his troops [from Orleans] in the beginning of Wednesday night. Crofton can file along the shore to his right, and meet you at the post you take ; let the men have their blankets and let the tents be struck, bundled up and ready to bring over. If we succeed in the first business, it may produce an action, which may produce the total conquest of Canada ; in all cases it is our duty to try the most likely way, whatever may be the event." (1)

This letter seems to have been overlooked in the discussion of the question of Wolfe's independent action. Why should Wolfe have told Burton what he refused to tell Monckton and Murray ? That he should withhold information from Townshend was not altogether inexplicable, and perhaps in Townshend we have the key to the mystery.

Fore-  
bodings.

What "harbinger preceding still the fates," what "precursor of fierce events," on this 12th night of September was it that affected both Wolfe and Montcalm ? What made the one feel he would not survive that night's enterprise, the other that irretrievable disaster was impending ? Among Montcalm's great anxieties was the problem of provisions : Quebec and his army, before the English secured so complete a command of the river, had been fed by both the land route and the water route. Latterly supplies had come by water as far as St. Augustine, thirteen miles from Quebec,<sup>2</sup> whence they had been taken overland. Now the recent bad weather had made the roads almost impassable, and there was nothing for it but to risk sending down boats in the dead of night in the hope that they might, by hugging the northern shore, get safely past the vessels lying

(1) Wright, p. 569.

<sup>2</sup> Kingsford, vol. iv, p. 260.

in mid-stream. From deserters Wolfe learned this very night that the provisions were to go down with the ebb-tide. The information was invaluable, and he turned it to account in a manner not less masterly than everything else associated with these historic hours. At the turn of the tide his boats, filled with men, were to put off from the vessels and float with the stream towards the city ; they must now anticipate the provision boats, and if by good luck he gained the heights before the mistake was discovered, his daring project would already be far on the way to success.

Everything was ready : the men on shore as well as the men on the transports were taking what rest they could get before the signal should be hoisted in the *Sutherland's* main-top shrouds which would start them on their momentous trip. Wolfe found time at this hour to visit a couple of young officers who were on the sick list, one of those little attentions in which he never failed. Then he thought of himself, and summoned to his cabin on board the *Sutherland*, Jack Jervis, who was in charge of the *Porcupine* sloop. How these two had become such intimate friends there is nothing in the papers of either of them that I have been able to trace to show ; may be the fact that they had been under the same schoolmaster, though not at the same time, was the first link in the chain of which the last was now to be forged. Wolfe handed over to his friend for disposal in case the presentiment which had seized him should be realised, his papers and a miniature of Miss Lowther, which he wore beneath his waistcoat. In his will he desired that the picture might be set in jewels to the value of £500 and returned to her by Jervis ; he made various

The turn  
of the tide.

legacies, asked Admiral Saunders to accept his light service of plate "in remembrance of his guest," left his papers and books to Carleton, made various money presents to certain officers, friends, and servants, and the residue to his "good mother entirely at her disposal." There remained nothing now to be done but to await the turn of the tide, the turn of the tide in every sense of the word for Wolfe, for Montcalm, for Canada, for America, for two great Empires. Midnight was approaching when a single lantern conveyed the order that Monckton's and Murray's men were to take their place in the boats: the night, hitherto lighted only by the stars, had become misty; the movement would therefore be shrouded from the sharpest watch on shore even if it were kept, and the men who had been warned to maintain silence made the least possible noise. Before the tide ceased to flow part of Holmes' fleet began to move up the river; it was his custom to go up and down with the tide, and no suspicion that any special development was at hand was started in the minds of the French, if they detected the big ships making the usual movement. For an attack they were prepared. Away on the other side of Quebec the fleet under Saunders was active,<sup>1</sup> and the Levi batteries flashed and boomed.

The signal  
to start.

About two o'clock a second signal was given and the boats, the first of which contained Wolfe, his staff, and twenty-four men who had been selected to lead what might prove to be a forlorn hope, set out in a

<sup>1</sup> An *Edinburgh Reviewer* (July, 1903), who has examined the ships' logs preserved in the Public Record Office, disputes the activity of both Holmes and Saunders as commonly reported, but I can see nothing in the ships' records to disprove that Holmes moved up the river to deceive Bougainville, or that Saunders demonstrated to deceive Montcalm.

procession which it is estimated took an hour to pass a given point. As the boats were carried swiftly but silently on the ebb tide, Wolfe is said to have revealed his own forebodings by reciting to his companions the verse from Gray's *Elegy* which ends—

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave,"

General and  
poet.

and to have made the comment that he would rather have been the author of those lines than take Quebec. The anecdote in its traditional form, accepted for long as true, is not credible ; it was subject to searching examination by Dr. E. E. Morris ;<sup>1</sup> and it is reasonably certain that if Wolfe did recite Gray's *Elegy* and make any such comment, it was not on this occasion. Is it conceivable that he should break the rule of silence he had laid down, by so unnecessary a proceeding as even a whispered recitation, or that he should tell men who were embarking on a life and death errand that their and his work was of less account than the poet's ? The original story is based on a statement made by a midshipman named Robison, and is to be found in a letter from Sir Walter Scott to Southey dated September 22nd, 1830, discovered by Mr. Augustine Birrell some years ago. Scott knew that Southey had in mind the publication of the life and letters of Wolfe, and recounted the anecdote, which he got first hand, for Southey's benefit.

"On the night when Wolfe crossed the river with his small army they passed in the men-of-war's long boats and launches, and the General himself in the Admiral's barge. The young midshipman who steered the boat was John Robison,

<sup>1</sup> *English Historical Review*, 1900, p. 125.



afterwards Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, a man of high scientific attainments. I have repeatedly heard the Professor say that during part of the passage Wolfe pulled out of his pocket and read to officers around (or, perhaps, repeated), Gray's celebrated Elegy in a Country Churchyard. I do not know if the recitation was not so well received as he expected, but he said, with a good deal of animation, "I can only say, Gentlemen, that, if the choice were mine, I would rather be the author of these verses than win the battle which we are to fight to-morrow morning." It must not be supposed that this was a matter of serious election, but it was a strong way of expressing his love of literature. I have (heard) Mr. Robison tell the story repeatedly, for his daughter became the wife of my intimate Friend Lord Erskine."

This letter, Mr. Birrell said in communicating it to the *Times*, "seems to prove the truth of the story as conclusively as human testimony can prove anything." What it does seem to prove is that Wolfe recited the lines, not when floating down the river, but a good many hours previously. Either that or Scott confused his facts.

Wolfe's  
luck.

- ✓ Many reasons have been given why Wolfe was peculiarly lucky in this supreme adventure. Parkman discovers seven;<sup>1</sup> the Abbé Casgrain discovers ten<sup>2</sup> and they all amount to this: that if the French had been as competent, as loyal, and as vigilant as the circumstances demanded, the path of glory would have been the path of crushing disaster. In Wolfe the French had to deal with a genius for war that was quite exceptional, and the Abbé Casgrain's editors sum the matter up admirably when they say: ✓ "Wolfe had good luck, it is true, but the good luck which accompanies excellent strategy." His good luck was much more in the immediate circumstances than in those antecedent to the stratagem itself;

<sup>1</sup> *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> *Wolfe and Montcalm*, pp. 184-5.



with the immediate circumstances in his favour, as they were, Wolfe's gallant twenty-four might still have effected a successful coup and the developments would have been pretty much what they were. When Wolfe's boat was opposite the Samos shore and consequently nearing his objective, a sentinel's voice broke the stillness of those anxious moments: "*Qui vive!*" A captain of Fraser's Highlanders, who knew French, answered "*La France!*" Parkman says that the question, "*À quel régiment?*" followed, and the captain, knowing that part of the corps was with Bougainville, answered: "*De la Reine.*"<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Casgrain says that the sentinel, thinking it was the convoy of provisions, the order for which had been countermanded though the guards had not been so informed, allowed the boats to pass without demanding the password or assuring himself of the truth.<sup>2</sup> A little later the challenge was repeated, and in response to the question, "*Pourquoi est-ce que vous ne parlez plus haut?*" the captain enjoined the sentry not to make a noise; the sloop, *Hunter*, was near, and they might be overheard. The presence of the *Hunter*, thus turned to such excellent account, had very nearly involved a mishap that would have been fatal. The captain had been misled as to the provision boats also. As Wolfe got within half a cable's length, he noticed that the *Hunter's* crew were running to quarters and training their guns on his boat. He was only just in time to hail her and prevent the probable failure of the whole enterprise. ■

<sup>1</sup> *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 298

<sup>2</sup> *Wolfe and Montcalm*, p. 180.

■ Wood, p. 229.

The  
landing.

The boats, safely past the second sentry, were carried so swiftly down by the current that Wolfe presently found himself overshooting the precise spot at which he wished to land. How they ever found their way at all and how they avoided hopeless confusion in the dark is sheer mystery. Led by Captain Delaune the first volunteers jumped ashore ; the narrow path to the top had been protected by an abatis of fallen trees, but the men never hesitated. With their guns slung on their backs they began to pull themselves up the steep face of the cliff with the aid of the bushes and anything that afforded foothold or handhold. A larger detachment followed, and all got up safely without so much as a challenge. Admiral Saunders described the difficulty of gaining the top as " scarcely credible " ;<sup>1</sup> it was hardly less credible that the inevitable cracking of branches of trees, the rolling down of stones and the involuntary mutterings of men who found themselves in danger of pitching headlong back to the shore should not have reached the ears of anyone in Vergor's camp. Wolfe remained below straining every nerve for the first indication of what might happen. He had his men now rapidly arriving ready to follow if the volunteers succeeded in overwhelming the guard ; if they failed they knew they would be sacrificed, but Wolfe would not have sacrificed his army. As Mr. Doughty suggests,<sup>2</sup> this view is borne out by the letter he wrote to Townshend a few hours previously : " General Monckton is charged with the first landing and attack on the Foulon. If he succeeds you will be pleased to give directions that the troops afloat

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Pitt*, vol. ii, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *The Siege of Quebec*, vol. iii, p. 83.

be set on shore with the utmost expedition as they are under your command."

Events moved rapidly ; when the leaders reached the top they made a dash for the rear of the white tents which were visible in the dark ; coming upon a picket Captain Macdonald, who also, fortunately, spoke French perfectly, was challenged and replied that he was bringing reinforcements from Beauport ; almost as the sentries discovered their mistake and gave the alarm by firing wildly at the apparitions rushing upon them, they were overpowered. Vergor, asleep in his tent, was startled by the firing and made his appearance only to be shot in the heel. Most of the picket escaped in the dark to the thickets and cornfields near. Again disaster was narrowly averted. Some of Wolfe's Light Infantry got up the cliff to the left by pre-arrangement, but the volunteers had done their work unaided so thoroughly that the friends whose coming might have been invaluable were forgotten. But for their splendid discipline and nerve the volunteers would certainly have fired. If they had, they would have disposed of many of Fraser's Highlanders. A loud cheer told Wolfe that all was well, and while the men already on top took several prisoners and gave vigorous chase to others, the forces in the boats were quickly disembarked ; the obstructions on the cliff path were cleared away ; the boats went out to the ships which had now also dropped down the river as far as the Foulon bringing more men, and Colonel Burton from the opposite shore joined Wolfe with Webb's Regiment. The General himself with an energy which in one who had recently suffered so much was unnatural, pulled himself up the cliff and formed his men in lines as they

Up the  
cliff.

arrived. Away on the left some few hundred yards distant was the battery of Samos which had opened a heavy fire on the boats and done some damage ; a little further still was the battery at Sillery, which fired vigorously on the squadron. Wolfe, Murray with the 58th Regiment, and Colonel Howe with the Light Infantry, went to capture the Samos battery ; this was accomplished after a smart skirmish, and then the battery at Sillery was attacked and silenced also.

Selecting  
the  
battlefield.

The British, numbering now between three and four thousand, stood undisputed masters of what were believed to be inaccessible cliffs. As the morning broke, cloudy and misty, and Wolfe surveyed the cornfields and the woods and the undulating country rising away towards Quebec, who shall say, who can for an instant understand, what his feelings were ? He knew that the apparently impossible having been accomplished the feat was the beginning of the end either for his army or Montcalm's. But he went about his business as coolly as ever he paraded his men at Inverness or at Dover. Behind him were the cliffs of the St. Lawrence rendering retreat out of the question ; on his left already attracted by the firing was Bougainville, with a force almost half as strong as his own ; on his right lay Quebec, with Vaudreuil and Montcalm and de Ramesay ; straight in front the very land lying between the St. Lawrence and the Charles which in his letter to his uncle three months before he had contemplated occupying at the opening of the campaign. He was no doubt as familiar with every inch of the ground as any man could be who had never had the opportunity of looking upon it before. A little reconnoitring and he made up his mind where he would take his stand for the

battle which he felt Montcalm must at last fight. He wheeled his army towards Quebec and marched to the plains of Abraham—a table-land from which Quebec was hidden by rising ground. The first sign of the enemy was a detachment of the Guyenne Regiment on the ridge between the British and the city. Wolfe halted his men, and made his dispositions; Monckton was towards the St. Lawrence, Murray towards the St. Charles, Wolfe himself in the centre. To prevent any flanking movement from the St. Charles, Townshend was placed at right angles facing the river; Burton had Webb's Regiment in reserve, Howe occupied the position in the rear from which the French had so recently been driven, and a battalion was in charge of the Foulon. All told Wolfe had some 4,000 men, the estimates varying from 3,500 to 4,800.<sup>1</sup> The number actually in the firing line was 3,111.<sup>2</sup>

Montcalm's first intimation that something was amiss induced him to believe that the British had successfully attacked the provision convoy on the safe arrival of which so much depended; the idea seemed to account for some part of his agitation throughout the night. When a messenger arrived with the news that the British had forced the Foulon the man was regarded as a lunatic; it was believed that his brain had been turned by sheer fright,<sup>3</sup> and he was not believed. But when Montcalm rode out in the early morning behind the Beauport lines until he got in view of the Plains across the St. Charles and there saw for himself the line of redcoats, he knew the business was serious as he said to the Chevalier

The alarm raised.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix III.

<sup>2</sup> Wood, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> Casgrain: *Journal du Marquis de Montcalm*, p. 611.

Johnstone, who was with him. He despatched messengers to bring up troops, and in headlong haste there pressed over the bridge of the St. Charles into and through the narrow streets of the almost ruined town "troops of Indians in scalp-locks and war paint, a savage glitter in their deep-set eyes; bands of Canadians whose all was at stake—faith, country and home; the colony regulars; the battalions of old France, a torrent of white uniforms and gleaming bayonets, La Sarre, Languedoc, Roussillon, Bearn, victors of Oswego, William Henry, and Ticonderoga. So they swept on, poured out upon the plain, some by the gate of St. Louis, and some by that of St. John, and hurried, breathless, to where the banners of Guyenne still fluttered on the ridge."<sup>1</sup>

Montcalm's  
decision.

To the rear there had been heard renewed firing. A detachment of Bougainville's men had come upon Colonel Howe and been repulsed. Bougainville himself by this time had probably been informed, and was moving to the assistance of Quebec with what haste he could. Montcalm called a council of war, and the decision was taken to give battle forthwith. Vaudreuil had not appeared on the scene and de Ramesay was not prepared to part with the guns for which Montcalm asked. Why did not Montcalm wait till he had gathered sufficient strength at any rate to give him a great numerical advantage? The arrival of Bougainville in due course would have improved the chances of victory incalculably. Some say Montcalm was anxious to fight before Vaudreuil should interfere; some that he was eager to snatch the laurels of this great day single-handed; others that he felt the instant necessity of driving Wolfe

<sup>1</sup> Parkman: *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, pp. 303-4.

back before he could entrench himself across the French line of communications. In a letter to Bougainville a week earlier he said: "Je crains toujours la communication coupée." If the enemy should steal a march on Bougainville, it would, he wrote, be for him to see that they did not entrench themselves. That is the secret. If further explanation be necessary it may be found in the simple desire of a gallant leader to dispose out of hand of a great menace. Whatever the cause, Montcalm did the one thing which Wolfe had invited him to do during eleven weary weeks. He came out into the open and fought. Indeed it is the opinion of the soldier as opposed to that of the layman that Montcalm had little choice. "Once Wolfe had gained the Heights in force, Montcalm was compelled to fight immediately for his very existence."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Corbett emphasises this point when he says: "Could every general who suffers an enemy to pierce his centre wait till he could combine a front and rear attack with his several wings, then interposition as a tactical stroke would lose the deadly character it has earned."<sup>2</sup>

Wolfe watched and awaited developments with a patience which was none the less perfect because he knew now that a few hours must determine the fate of both armies; a few hours and the news would be on its way to Amherst and Pitt that a bold stroke had either succeeded brilliantly or failed disastrously. Montcalm was not long in making his dispositions; he sent Indians and Canadians to worry Wolfe's flanks, and well they knew how to take advantage of every inch of cover afforded by a clump of trees, a

**The French advance.**

<sup>1</sup> Wood, pp. 247-8.

<sup>2</sup> *England in the Seven Years' War*, vol. i, p. 470.



bush or a break in the ground. There was sharp fighting on the left and Townshend's men were hotly engaged in taking and losing and retaking some houses which afforded excellent shelter for sharpshooters. Montcalm advanced steadily, his colonials on either wing; his army was about equal to Wolfe's in numbers. As it moved forward, its weapons gleaming in occasional bursts of sunlight, it presented a spectacle of blue and white uniforms in striking contrast with the red lines waiting to meet it. Montcalm had several field pieces which did a considerable amount of damage, but Wolfe had only a couple of light guns which Saunders' blue-jackets, the handy men then as ever, had managed to haul up the Foulon path. Montcalm rode at the head of his men; Wolfe moved freely along the lines, giving his last instructions. He had, with the weakness of more than one famous general, donned a brand new uniform for the occasion, and his tall figure was conspicuous. For their better protection, Wolfe for a time kept most of his men lying at full length on the ground. Now that the enemy was actually approaching he had his ranks two deep—"this was the first occasion in history that one European army had stood two deep to face another on a flat and open battlefield";<sup>1</sup> every musket was to be loaded with two balls, and not a shot was to be fired until he gave the word. The French came on shouting wildly, Indian fashion, and firing as they came. Wolfe moved his men a little forward as though to encourage and incite the attack; then they halted and stood to be shot at without a sign that they meant to reply.

<sup>1</sup> Wood, p. 236.



It was a trying few minutes for men whose battle blood was up and made them as eager to get at the foe as a hound to break away from the restraining leash; the discipline which failed at Montmorency was unshakeable in face of a galling shower which left gaps in the British ranks. Wolfe at that moment seemed to pervade his army; every detail seemed to be under his immediate control and he had a word of encouragement for those who waited so loyally for his commands, a word of sympathy for those who fell martyrs to discipline. As Wolfe surveyed the enemy, declared one who observed him closely, his expression became "radiant and joyful beyond description." Some slight confusion and a momentary pause was caused in the French ranks by the action of the irregulars who true to the practice of Canadian as well as New England rangers—a practice that might have saved Braddock's force from annihilation if it had not been misunderstood—threw themselves on the ground after firing in order to re-load. The French regulars were apparently as little prepared as Braddock for the movement. But they swept on until they were within some forty paces. Then Wolfe's command came, and the British muskets rang out as one: "the most perfect volley ever heard on a battlefield" sounding to British and French alike as if fired from "a single monstrous weapon." There were few British bullets which did not find a billet in that point-blank discharge. Montcalm's army reeled before it. As the smoke cleared away it revealed the hideous writhing chaos of human agony; in the brief interval the British had reloaded and again they fired. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and Montcalm attempted in vain

The  
victory.

to stay the headlong flight of the survivors. Wolfe ordered the charge, and the Highlanders, with a yell rivalling that of Red Indians, the Grenadiers and the rest drove the panic-stricken remnant of the French army back into Quebec or across the St. Charles ; the pursuit was checked only by the guns on the walls or the Canadians and Indians who lurked in the woods.

How  
Wolfe died.

The victory was complete, but costly : only less costly in personnel to the British than to the French. Wolfe and Monckton were both wounded early in the engagement ; the General's wrist was torn by a bullet, but he bound up the wound with a handkerchief ; he was next hit in the groin, but refused to retire for an instant ; he continued to direct the fight until the moment when the French gave way before his terrific fire. Then placing himself at the head of the Grenadiers he led the charge. But he did not get far. A bullet entered his chest, he reeled and was only saved from falling by two officers who saw him stagger. " Don't let my brave fellows see me fall," he said, as though he understood in that supreme moment what his presence meant to his army. It was the solicitude of the true captain. He was carried to the rear and knew that the surgeon's skill was useless. " I'm done for," he murmured, as he sank into a state of semi-consciousness. He revived for a second when he heard the cry : " They run ! " " Who run ? " " The French, Sir, they give way everywhere." Wolfe opened his glazed eyes and the master spirit gave its final orders : " Then go to Colonel Burton and tell him to take Webb's Regiment and cut off their retreat by the St. Charles." He turned on his side, a smile broke upon his pain-contracted

face, and in words variously given but all to one effect, breathed his last: "God be praised: I die content." . . . "At 11," so runs the simple, eloquent entry in the master's Log of the *Lowestoft*, "came on board the corpse of General Wolfe."

On the French side the General also was among those wounded unto death: he was shot in the effort to rally his broken soldiery, and was supported back to Quebec on his charger. Wolfe died happy in the hour of victory: Montcalm happy that he would not be a witness of the surrender of Quebec. He survived till the following morning. He was forty-seven; Wolfe thirty-two. ✓

Montcalm  
mortally  
wounded.

By a stroke of inscrutable fate the command devolved on Townshend; he completed the work begun by Wolfe; Bougainville appeared in force, but when he found that all was over, retreated and Townshend paid Wolfe's choice of a battle-ground the compliment of refusing to leave it even to deliver a blow at Bougainville's dismayed and retiring army. Townshend entrenched himself; five days later the capitulation was signed; the French marched out from Quebec with the honours of war; the British entered into possession for the second time; and though Murray the following year nearly contrived to lose it again to de Lévis, it has remained British during 150 years—a monument to British prowess ranking with Gibraltar and the Ridge at Delhi. Once only since the Treaty of Paris confirmed the surrender of Canada has it been seriously challenged, and that was by the American rebels who sent Arnold and Montgomery to capture it. But Carleton, Wolfe's friend, held it for England against the very men in whose interests it had been wrested from France.

Townshend  
in  
command.

Montcalm is credited with a prophecy<sup>1</sup> that if England took Canada she would lose America; whether the document embodying that prophecy is genuine or not—and Parkman after exhaustive inquiry declared it an imposture<sup>2</sup>—it was not a solitary view, and within ten years of the signature of the Treaty which ended the career of New France, New England was claiming privileges the assertion of which drove British authority from the English section of America, leaving it intact only in Canada. So speedy and so mighty were the results attending Wolfe's independent daring when he decided to try his fortunes at the Anse au Foulon.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. ii, p. 39.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WOLFE'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHARACTER

ADMIRAL SAUNDERS, for none but he could have taken so important a decision, arranged forthwith that the body of Wolfe should be embalmed and sent to England. It was his tribute, the most significant and eloquent he could pay, to the loss sustained by his country in the death of his military colleague ; he and Wolfe for the past six months had lived and toiled together, discussed great strategic problems, evolved great schemes in the most trying circumstances, faced the fortunes of war in positions of joint responsibility, and to appreciate Wolfe's quality both as man and as soldier none was better placed than the master of the co-operating fleet. Whilst the mortal remains of Wolfe were being encased for transference to his native land, those of his opponent found sepulchre in a cavity made beneath the floor of the Ursuline convent by a British shell. ✓

Brought to England.

British and French alike mourned their heroes now at rest, and posterity in both countries as in Canada itself, has honoured the vanquished with the victor. The Wolfe-Montcalm monument which stands on Dufferin Terrace, Quebec, is surely an unique memorial to rival heroes. A joint memorial.

MORTEM VIRTUS COMMUNEM  
FAMAM HISTORIA  
MONUMENTUM POSTERITAS  
DEDIT.

At the moment that Montcalm was breathing his last Townshend was issuing General Orders, of which the first two lines speak for themselves—

“ 14 Sept., 1759—PLAINS OF ABRAHAM.

“ PAROLE—WOLFE.

COUNTERSIGN—ENGLAND.”

The pathos  
of glorious  
war.

In England the news of the victory and death of Wolfe followed quick on the despatch to Pitt in which he had indicated his difficulties in a way to make the Government and the nation feel that the task set him was beyond his powers, if indeed it was not beyond the powers of any man. The revulsion of feeling from the dull acceptance of disappointment to the realisation that a triumph had been achieved equal to the highest hopes, that a brilliant coup had wiped failure completely from the record, carried the nation into transports which Horace Walpole described in his own vivid way.<sup>1</sup> It was Horace Walpole who, exactly twenty years earlier, had said that the people who were ringing their bells would soon be wringing their hands; now the process was reversed and people who were preparing to wring their hands rang their bells, lighted their bonfires, and almost buried the king under an avalanche of congratulatory addresses. But the joy was chastened by the recollection that Wolfe had paid the price of victory with his life. To two hearts at least the event brought deepest sorrow; there was the widowed mother, of whom he was ever so thoughtful, and there was the lady to whom he had so recently become engaged.<sup>2</sup> Few are the joys that do not bring with

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of George II*, vol. ii, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Lowther in due time married the Duke of Bolton. Mr. Doughty records practically all that is known of her, which is very little.

them some secret sorrow, and the happiness of a nation is fertilised by the salt tears of individuals. When leaders themselves fall, the public consciousness of homes bereaved is quickened. The pathos of glorious war was borne in upon the masses at Portsmouth who awaited the signal from the *Royal William* on Saturday, the 17th November, 1759, for the removal of the body. At eight o'clock it was lowered into a twelve-oared barge, which was towed by two twelve-oared barges and attended in solemn procession by twelve twelve-oared barges. Grief, we are told, made every man and woman mute, and for an hour the minute guns of the ships alone broke the hush. The body was received on shore by a regiment of invalids and a company from the garrison; it was put on a hearse, and with flags half-mast on the fort, with the arms of the men in the train reversed, to the ringing of muffled bells and the booming of guns, the hearse, followed by a solitary mourning coach specially sent from London, passed through the weeping crowd on its way to the family vault at Greenwich.<sup>1</sup>

If Wolfe had lived! From the emotion of the hour when his body arrived at Portsmouth we may conceive what would have happened had he been spared to return the Conqueror, the hero. As it was, neither oratory nor poetry was quite equal to an occasion, than which none more inspiring, it might be thought, could be desired. Pitt's glowing eulogy in Parliament was apparently so carefully prepared that it failed to satisfy; according to Walpole at least it had not the true ring; the versifier perpetrated lines that hardly reached the lyrical level demanded for a third-rate

A great theme.

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1759, p. 282-3.

music-hall ballad ; no poet has taken Quebec for his theme, and the one outstanding poetic reference to Wolfe's achievements and abiding influence is to be found in Cowper—

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still.  
Time was when it was praise and boast enough  
In every clime, and travel where we might,  
That we were born her children. Praise enough  
To fill the ambition of a private man  
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue  
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wolfe, where'er he fought,  
Put so much of his heart into his act  
That his example had a magnet's force,  
And all were swift to follow whom all loved." (1)

Unhappy  
recrimina-  
tions.

It is matter for profound regret that personal recriminations should have challenged Wolfe's title to the chief glory in the conquest of Quebec, recriminations in their way as unworthy as those with which Vaudreuil and his peculiar friends pursued the memory of Montcalm. What Townshend's ambitious designs began the loyalty of a descendant has unfortunately revived, and Colonel Townshend's action has been supported in quarters from which a more intimate knowledge of the facts might have been expected. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that Townshend was anxious to appropriate the laurels ; he addressed a despatch to Pitt in which his only reference to Wolfe was : " It was then our General fell at the head of Braggs'." He sent a copy of that despatch to Amherst with a covering letter which comments on the battle but makes no mention

(1) *The Task*, Book II.



of Wolfe. In his orders to the troops on the 14th September he struck a note which came perilously near the contemptuous when he said that the general officers wished "that the person who lately commanded them had survived so glorious a day." From whom did Warburton get his view that Townshend was not only the author of the plan by which Quebec was taken but was actually entitled to the credit for scaling the cliff,<sup>1</sup> when as a matter of fact the cliff had been secured before Townshend was even on his way with the boats? Townshend, with all his presumption, could not be responsible for that because his despatch to Pitt refers to his waiting till "the second disembarkation." But Townshend's ambition may be seen from a letter of Monckton's on the day when the capitulation of Quebec was signed. Monckton was ignored in the negotiations and protested that he did not imagine any arrangement would be signed without consultation with him. He was Townshend's superior, and as within three days of the battle he was rapidly recovering from his wounds, there was no reason why he should not have been considered. Townshend, held in check by the master-mind of Wolfe during a campaign of which he had grown heartily tired, revelled in the freedom of a self-sufficiency which left no room even for common courtesy to a disabled colleague. As early as the 3rd October Horace Walpole spoke of Lady Townshend as "the conqueror's mother. . . . I hear she has covered herself with more laurel leaves than were heaped on the children in the wood." Thus the idea that Townshend's was the principal part in the business was already abroad. The

<sup>1</sup> *Conquest of Canada*, vol. ii, p. 322.

meanness of it all is just what might be expected from one who would have disclaimed every shred of responsibility for failure.

Private  
*versus*  
public  
opinion.

In 1760 the Townshend pretension induced a satirist of the time to address an open letter to "an honourable Brigadier-General Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Forces, Canada"—a title which the writer said was given by the Compilers of the Court Calendar to Brigadier-General T——d. The letter is in this vein: "Your understanding was not to be dazzled by Mr. Wolfe's foolish passion for glory. He had precipitately ventured beyond all possibility of retreating. He had no other chance but that of death or victory, especially after you had entered your solemn protest against his plan for attacking the enemy." This document was responsible for a controversy in the true eighteenth-century manner, and Townshend sought to disprove the case against himself by publishing a letter to someone unknown which he was supposed to have written on the 25th September containing the words: "In General Wolfe I have lost but a friend," and "We lost poor General Wolfe who fell in the warmest part of the engagement." Strange that these references should appear only in a private document where usually prejudices hold greater sway than in public! Walpole, for instance, in his history judged Wolfe in very different vein from that of his letters. Walpole was obsessed by his love for Conway, whose part at Rochefort Wolfe had dared to criticise. Writing to Conway on the 18th October, 1759, Walpole says—

"Wolfe as I am convinced has fallen a sacrifice to his rash blame of you. If I understand anything in the world his letter that came on Sunday said this: Quebec is

impregnable, it is flinging away the lives of men to attempt it. I am in the situation of Conway at Rochefort, but having blamed him I must do what I now see he was in the right to say wrong and yet what he would have done, and as I am commander, which he was not, I have the melancholy power of doing what he was prevented doing. Poor man! his life has paid the price of his injustice and as his death has purchased such benefit to his country I lament him as I am sure you do who have twenty times more courage."

✓Wolfe's place in our national history is secure, and the judgment of Pitt is the judgment of impartial posterity. Parliament voted him a monument in Westminster Abbey, and the country and the Government owed him so much and acclaimed his achievements so gratefully, that it would be incredible were the evidence not conclusive, that his mother was point-blank refused assistance when she asked to be placed in a position to comply with the not very excessive commands contained in his will. Red tape left her to do from her own slender resources what should have been done by the nation without the asking. Wolfe gave England an Empire at the cost of his life, and official gratitude having no further favours to come, was callous to all claims which conflicted with official convention. It was unworthy of Pitt, and in strict conformity with the spirit of the time. Wolfe in his short life had done more ✓  
for England than any soldier, except Clive, since Marlborough; his brilliant soldiership was manifest almost from the very hour that he received his commission; his one mistake at Montmorency would not have been costly if his men had given him the chance of discovering it before it was too late; nor possibly need that mistake ever have been made had Amherst seen his way to forge ahead as he probably would have done had Wolfe been at his elbow

Official ingratitude,

as he was at Louisbourg. Amherst had not the genius for sweeping difficulties aside; he proceeded to remove them. The historian of Canada blames him for the slow progress which enabled Montcalm so long to keep the bulk of his forces intact. Possibly he believed Wolfe must fail.<sup>1</sup>

Wolfe as  
general.

When it became necessary to despatch de Lévis to Montreal as a precaution in case Bourlamaque was driven from Isle aux Noix, and to give Bougainville a substantial force about Cap Rouge in order to prevent any landing there, Wolfe saw how to use both his own and Saunders' resources to the fullest advantage. It is a favourite view with those who know their Wolfe superficially or their Thackeray thoroughly that Wolfe took the gambler's chance. "Is merit or madness the patron of greatness?" asks Thackeray. "Is it Frolic or Fortune?" Thackeray vows that he scarce knows whether in the last act of the hero's life to admire the result of genius, invention, and daring or the boldness of a gambler winning surprising odds. "Suppose his ascent discovered a half-hour sooner, and his people, as they would have been assuredly, beaten back? Suppose the Marquis de Montcalm not to quit his entrenched lines to accept that strange challenge? Suppose these points—and none of them depend upon Mr. Wolfe at all—and what becomes of the glory of the young hero, of the great minister who discovered him, of the intoxicated nation which rose up frantic with self-congratulation at the victory?"<sup>2</sup> Except in so far as the element which some men call Luck, which Wolfe regarded as the intervention of an Inscrutable Power, enters into all human affairs,

<sup>1</sup> Kingsford: vol. iv, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> *The Virginians*, chap. lxxiv.

there was little left to chance on that September morning. Everything *did* depend on Wolfe. He was utilising his extreme mobility and obeying a sound strategical law,<sup>1</sup> and he had taken such precautions that if the strategical law had failed him he would have withdrawn with his forces practically intact. That was not the gambler's part. Wolfe from the moment he watched the operations at Rochefort, seized the significance and possibilities of combined, or as Mr. Corbett calls them, amphibious operations; he set an example by which others were to profit, as any reader of Mr. Corbett's pages will easily understand. To study the history of the War of Independence which Wolfe's generalship did so much to make possible, is to start one speculating as to the chances of the revolt if a Wolfe had been at hand to take charge of the earlier movements of the campaign. One historian of Canada during that time<sup>2</sup> finds it impossible to keep the thought of what Wolfe would have done from his pages. There would at least have been no Saratoga; and if Washington had triumphed ultimately he would have held a still bigger place in history.

✓ In James Wolfe England lost one of the rare characters that no community of men would willingly let die and that the eighteenth century could spare less perhaps than any. His virtues were as high above the spirit of the age as his military abilities, his insight, his energy, his grip were beyond those of commanders whose opportunities were greater. "I may with strict truth," says Knox,<sup>3</sup> "advance that Major-General

A rare character.

<sup>1</sup> Corbett, vol. i, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> Lucas: *A History of Canada, 1763-1812*.

<sup>3</sup> *Historical Journal*, vol. ii, p. 73.

✓ James Wolfe by his great talents and martial disposition which he discovered early in life was greatly superior to his experience in generalship, and was by no means inferior to a Frederick, a Henry, or a Ferdinand." What he accomplished was done in the years when the ordinary mortal is learning his business; he was to war what William Pitt, the son of the great commoner who sent him to Quebec, was later to politics, what Keats was to literature.<sup>1</sup> Self-educated to a very large extent alike in his profession and in letters, a right knowledge both of books and men came to him as by the sort of instinct which directs some men to their destination in strange localities where the majority would go astray. As Colonel Lambert told Warrington, Wolfe was "a good scholar as well as a consummate soldier"; and with it all there was about him "a simplicity, a frankness, and a sort of glorious bravery," to quote Warrington himself, which made it as natural for him to command troops of friends as to command his seniors in the field. Smollett truly said—

"Had his faculties been exercised to their full extent by opportunity and action, had his judgment been fully matured by age and experience, he would, without doubt, have rivalled in reputation the most celebrated captains of antiquity." (<sup>2</sup>)

His moral courage went hand in hand with his physical: and surely physical courage is never greater than when it rises superior to such wracking pains and chronic ill-health as Wolfe's. "A delicate constitution, and a body unequal to that vigorous and enterprising soul that it lodged," said Edmund Burke.<sup>3</sup> He resisted nepotism and favouritism to the

<sup>1</sup> Beckles Willson: *Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1908.

(<sup>2</sup>) *History of England* (1790 Edn.), vol. ii, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register*, vol. ii, p. 39.

incompetent even when the petitioner was his dearly-loved mother, and the enemies he made only serve to point Emerson's saying, that "the sun were insipid if the world were not opaque." Stern disciplinarian though he was, he was loved by his men, and one of his captains on the day of the battle which ended his brilliantly brief career spoke of him as "the gentleman who commands in chief and who in his military capacity is perhaps equalled by few and surpassed by none."<sup>1</sup> He was "The Officer's Friend ; the Soldier's Father."<sup>2</sup> Devotion is the only word that sums up his life : devotion to parents, to friends, to profession, to country, to truth. His very failings, his constant complaints, his strong dislikes, his impatience of stupidity and slackness buttressed by convention, his uncompromisingly harsh judgments on occasion, only emphasise the essential sweetness of his nature, the integrity of his patriotism, the readiness to sacrifice self for the common weal. A marble tablet placed in Westerham Church by his co-mate Warde bears the lines—

"While George in sorrow bows his laurell'd head  
And bids the artist grace the soldier dead ;  
We raise no sculptur'd trophy to thy name.  
Brave youth ! the fairest in the list of fame  
Proud of thy birth, we boast th'auspicious year,  
Struck with thy fall, we shed a general tear ;  
With humble grief inscribe one artless stone  
And from thy matchless honours date our own.

I Decus I Nostrum."

What belongs to Westerham belongs to the Empire, ✓  
and with the men of Kent the men of Great and  
Greater Britain may say as they close the story of  
Wolfe's life : "His glory is ours."

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Wood, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Doughty, vol. iii, p. 236.





## APPENDIX I

HEADQUARTERS AT THE CAMP OF MONTMORENCI,  
RIVER OF ST. LAWRENCE,  
*Sept. 2d, 1759.*

SIR,—

I wish I could, upon this occasion have the honour of transmitting to you, a more favourable Account of the progress of His Majesty's Arms; But the Obstacles we have met with in the Operations of the Campaign, are much greater than we had reason to expect or could foresee. Not so much from the number of the Enemy (tho' superior to us) as from the natural strength of the country, which the Marquis de Montcalm seems wisely to depend upon.

When I learnt that succours of all kinds had been thrown into Quebec, That five Battalions of regular Troops completed from the best of the Inhabitants of the Country, Some of the Troops of the Colony, and every Canadian that was able to bear Arms, besides several Nations of Savages, had taken the Field in a very advantageous situation; I could not flatter myself that I should be able to reduce the Place: I sought however an occasion to attack their Army, knowing well that with these Troops I was able to fight, And hoping that ■ Victory might disperse them.

We found them incamp'd along the Shore of Beauport, from the River St. Charles to the Falls of Montmorenci, & intrench'd in every accessible part. The 27th of June we landed upon the Isle of Orleans; But receiving a message from the Admiral, that there was Reason to think the Enemy had Artillery & a Force upon the Point of Levi, I detach'd Brigadier Monckton with four Battalions to drive them from thence. He pass'd the River the 29th, at Night, & march'd the next Day to the Point; He obliged the Enemy's Irregulars to retire & possess'd himself of that Post; The advanced Partys upon this occasion had two or three skirmishes with the Canadians and Indians with little loss on either side. Colonel Carleton march'd with a Detachment to the Westernmost point of the Isle of Orleans, From whence our Operations were likely to begin.

It was absolutely necessary to possess these two Points & fortify them ; Because from either the one or the other, the Enemy might make it impossible for any Ship to lye in the Bason of Quebec, or even within two miles of it.

Batterys of Cannon & Mortars were erected with great Dispatch, on the Point of Levi, to bombard the Town and Magazines and to injure the Works and Batterys: the Enemy perceiving these Works in some Forwardness, pass'd the River with 1,600 men, to attack & destroy them : Unluckily they fell into Confusion, fired upon one another, & went back again, By which we lost an Opportunity of defeating this large Detachment. The Effect of this Artillery has been so great (tho' across the River), that the Upper Town is considerably damaged, & the Lower Town entirely destroy'd.

The works for the security of our Hospitals and Stores on the Isle of Orleans being finished : on the 9th of July at night we pass'd the North Channel & encamp'd near the Enemy's left, the River Montmorenci between us. The next morning, Capt. Danks's company of Rangers posted in a wood, to cover some Workmen, were attack'd & defeated by a Body of Indians ; And had so many killed & wounded as to be almost disabled for the rest of the Campaign. The Enemy also suffer'd in this Affair & were in their turn driven off by the nearest Troops.

The Ground to the Eastward of the Falls seem'd to be (as it really is) higher than that on the Enemy's side, to command it in a manner which might be made usefull to us :— There is besides a Ford below the Falls, which may be pass'd for some hours in the latter part of the Ebb, & beginning of the Flood Tide ; and I had hopes that possibly, means might be found of passing the river above, so as to fight the Marquis de Montcalm upon terms of less disadvantage, than directly attacking his Intrenchments. In reconnoitring the River Montmorenci, we found it fordable at a place about three miles up, But the opposite Bank was intrench'd & so steep & woody, that it was to no purpose to Attempt a Passage there ; The Escort was twice attacked by the Indians, who were as often repulsed, But in these Rencounters we had forty (Officers & Men) kill'd & wounded.

The 18th of July, two Men of War, two arm'd Sloops, & two Transports with some Troops on board, pass'd by the Town without any Loss, & got into the Upper River ; This enabled me to reconnoitre the Country above, where I found the same attention on the Enemy's side & great difficultys on ours, Arising from the Nature of the Ground, & the Obstacles to our Communication with the Fleet. But what I feared most,

was, that if we should land between the Town & the River Cap Rouge, the Body first landed could not be reinforced before they were attack'd by the Enemy's whole Army. Notwithstanding these difficultys I thought once of attempting it at St. Nicholas, about three miles above the Town ; But perceiving that the Enemy were jealous of the design, were preparing against it, and had actually brought Artillery & a Mortar (which, being so near to Quebec, they could increase as they pleased) to play upon the Shipping ; And as it must have been many hours before we could attack them (even supposing a favourable night for the Boats to pass by the town unhurt) It seem'd so hazardous that I thought it best to desist.

However, to divide the Enemy's force, & to draw their attention as high up the River as possible, And to procure some Intelligence I sent a detachment under the Command of Colonel Carleton, to land at the Point de Trempe,<sup>1</sup> to attack whatever he might find there, bring off some Prisoners, & all the usefull Papers he could get. I had been inform'd, that a Number of the Inhabitants of Quebec had retired to that Place, and that probably we should find ■ Magazine of Provisions there.

The Colonel was fired upon by a Body of Indians, the Moment he landed, but they were soon dispersed, & driven into the Woods : He search'd for Magazines, but to no purpose, brought off some Prisoners, & return'd with little loss. After this business I came back to Montmorenci, where I found that Brigadier Townshend had by a superior fire prevented the French from erecting a Battery on the bank of the River, from whence they intended to cannonade our Camp. I now resolved to take the first opportunity which presented itself of attacking the Enemy, tho' posted to great advantage, & everywhere prepared to receive us.

As the Men of War cannot (for want of a sufficient depth of Water) come near enough to the Enemy's Intrenchments to annoy them in the least ; The Admiral had prepared two Transports (drawing but little water) which upon occasions could be run aground, to favour a Descent. With the help of these Vessels, which I understood would be carry'd by the Tide close in shore, I proposed to make myself Master of a detach'd Redoubt near to the Water's Edge, & whose situation appear'd to be out of Musquet Shot of the Intrenchment upon the Hill : If the Enemy supported this detach'd piece, it would necessarily bring on an Engagement, what we most wish'd for ; And if not, I should have it in my Power to examine their

<sup>1</sup> Pointe Aux Trembles.

Situation, so as to be able to determine where we could best attack them.

Preparations were accordingly made for an Engagement, The 31st of July, in the forenoon, the boats of Fleet were fill'd with Grenadiers & a part of Brigadier Monckton's Brigade from the Point of Levi; The two Brigades under Brigadiers Townshend & Murray, were order'd to be in readiness to pass the Ford when it should be thought necessary. To facilitate the passage of this Corps, the Admiral had placed the Centurion in the Channel, so that she might check the fire of the lower battery, which commanded the Ford; This Ship was of great use, as her fire was very judiciously directed. A great Quantity of Artillery was placed upon the Eminence, so as to batter & enfilade the left of their Intrenchments.

From the vessel which run aground nearest in I observed that the Redoubt was too much commanded, to be Kep't without very great loss. And the more as the two arm'd Ships could not be brought near enough to cover both with their Artillery & Musquetry, Which I at first conceived they might. But as the Enemy seem'd in some Confusion, and we were prepared for an Action, I thought it a proper time to make an attempt upon their Intrenchment. Orders were sent to the Brigadiers General, to be ready with the Corps under their Command, Brigadier Monckton to land, And the Brigadiers Townshend & Murray to pass the Ford. At a proper time of the Tide, the signal was made. But in rowing towards the Shore, many of the Boats grounded upon a Ledge that runs off a considerable distance. This accident put us into some Disorder, lost a great deal of time, & obliged me to send an Officer to stop Brigadier Townshend's march, whom I then observed to be in motion. While the Seamen were getting the Boats off, the Enemy fired a number of Shells & Shot, but did no considerable damage. As soon as this Disorder could be set a little to Rights, & the Boats were ranged in a proper Manner, some of the Officers of the Navy went in with me to find a better place to land; we took one Flat-bottom'd Boat with us to make the Experiment, & as soon as we had found a fit part of the Shore, the Troops were ordered to disembark; Thinking it not yet too late for the Attempt.

The thirteen companys of Grenadiers & 200 of the second Royal American Battalion got first on shore; the Grenadiers were ordered to form themselves into four distinct bodys & to begin the Attack, supported by Brigadier Monckton's Corps, As soon as the other Troops had pass'd the Ford, &

were at hand to assist. But whether, from the Noise & hurry at landing, or from some other Cause, the Grenadiers, instead of forming themselves as they were directed, ran on impetuously towards the Enemy's Intrenchments in the utmost Disorder & Confusion, without waiting for the Corps which were to sustain them, & join in the Attack:—Brigadier Monckton was not landed, & Brigadier Townshend was still at a considerable Distance, tho' upon his march to join us, in very good Order.

The Grenadiers were check'd by the Enemy's first Fire, & obliged to shelter themselves in or about the Redoubt, which the French abandon'd upon their Approach. In this Situation they continued for some time, unable to form under so hot a fire, & having many gallant officers wounded, who (careless of their Persons) had been solely intent upon their Duty: I saw the Absolute Necessity of calling them off, that they might form themselves behind Brigadier Monckton's Corps, which was now landed, & drawn up upon the Beach in extream good Order. By this new Accident & this second Delay, It was near Night; A sudden Storm came on, & the Tide began to make, so that I thought it most advisable not to persevere in so difficult an Attack, lest (in case of a Repulse) the Retreat of Brigadier Townshend's Corps might be hazardous & uncertain.

Our Artillery had a great effect upon the Enemy's left, where Brigadiers Townshend & Murray were to have attacked, And it is probable that, if those Accidents I have spoken of, had not happen'd, We should have penetrated there, Whilst our left & center, more remote from our Artillery, must have bore all the violence of their Musquetry.

The French did not attempt to interrupt our March; some of their Savages came down to murder such wounded as could not be brought off, And to scalp the Dead, as their Custom is.

The Place where the Attack was intended, has these Advantages over all others hereabout—Our Artillery could be brought into use—the greatest Part, or even the Whole of the Troops, might act at once—And the Retreat (in case of a Repulse) was secure, at least for a certain time of the Tide. Neither one, nor other of these Advantages can any where else be found.—The Enemy were indeed posted upon a commanding Eminence—The Beach upon which the Troops were drawn up, was of deep Mud, with Holes, and cut by several Gullies—The Hill to be ascended, very steep, & not every where practicable—The Enemy numerous in their ntrenchments & their fire hot—If this attack had succeeded,

our loss must certainly have been great, and their's inconsiderable from the shelter which the neighbouring Woods afforded them.—The River St. Charles still remained to be passed, before the Town was invested—All these circumstances I considered, But the Desire to Act in Conformity to the King's intentions induced me to make this Trial, Persuaded that a victorious Army finds no Difficultys.

The Enemy have been fortifying ever since with Care, so as to make a second attempt still more dangerous.

Immediately after this Check, I sent Brigadier Murray above the Town with 1,200 men, Directing him to assist Rear-Admiral Holmes in the Destruction of the French Ships (if they could be got at) in order to open a Communication with General Amherst. The Brigadier was to seek every favourable Opportunity of fighting some of the Enemy's detachments, provided he could do it upon tolerable Terms, And to use all the Means in his Power to provoke them to attack him. He made two different attempts to land upon the North Shore, without success; but in a third was more fortunate. He landed unexpectedly at Dechambaud & burnt a Magazine there, in which were some Provisions, some Ammunition, and all the spare Stores, Cloathing, Arms, & Baggage of their Army. Finding that their Ships were not to be got at, & little Prospect of bringing the Enemy to battle, He reported his Situation to me, & I order'd him to join the Army. The Prisoners he took informed him of the Surrender of the Fort of Niagara, And we discovered by intercepted Letters, that the Enemy had abandoned Carillon<sup>1</sup> & Crown Point, were retired to the Isle aux Noix, And that General Amherst was making Preparations to pass the Lake Champlain, to fall upon Monsieur de Bourlemaque's Corps, which consists of three Battalions of Foot, & as many Canadians as make the whole amount to 3,000 Men.

The Admiral's Dispatches & mine would have gone eight or ten Days sooner, If I had not been prevented from writing by a Fever; I found myself so ill, & am still so weak, that I begg'd the General Officers to consult together for the Publick Utility. They are all of opinion, that, (as more Ships & Provisions have now got above the Town) they should try, by conveying up a Corps of 4 or 5,000 Men, (which is nearly the whole strength of the Army, after the Points of Levi and Orleans are left in a proper State of Defence) to draw the Enemy from their present Situation, & bring them to an Action. I have acquiesced in their Proposal, & we are preparing to put it in Execution.

<sup>1</sup> Ticonderoga.

The Admiral and I have examin'd the Town, with a view to a general Assault, but after consulting with the Chief Engineer who is well acquainted with the interior parts of it, and after viewing it with the utmost attention, we found, that tho' the Batterys of the lower Town might be easily silenced by the Men of War, Yet the Business of an Assault would be little advanced by that, since the few Passages that lead from the lower to the Upper Town are carefully intrench'd, And the upper Batterys cannot be affected by the Ships which must receive considerable Damage from them & from the Mortars.

The Admiral would readily join in this or in any other Measure for the Publick Service, But I could not propose to him an undertaking of so dangerous a Nature & promising so little Success.

At my first coming into the Country, I used all the Means in my Power, to engage the Canadians to lay down their Arms, by offers of such Protection & Security for themselves, their Property and Religion as was consistent with the known mildness of His Majesty's Government. I found that good treatment had not the desired Effect, so that of late I have changed my Measures & laid waste the Country; partly to engage the Marquis de Montcalm to try the Event of a Battle to prevent the Ravage, And partly in Return for many Insults offer'd to our People by the Canadians, As well as the frequent Inhumanitys exercised upon our own Frontiers. It was necessary also to have some Prisoners as Hostages for their good Behaviour to our People in their Hands, whom I had reason to think they did not use very well. Major Dalling surprized the Guard of a village & brought in about 380 Prisoners, which I keep, not proposing any Exchange till the end of the Campaign.

In case of a Disappointment, I intended to fortify Coudres & leave 3,000 Men for the Defence of it; But it was too late in the Season, to collect Materials sufficient for covering so large a Body.

To the uncommon strength of the Country, the Enemy have added (for the Defence of the River) a great Number of Floating Batteries & Boats. By the vigilance of these, and the Indians round our different Posts, it has been impossible to execute anything by surprize. We have had almost daily skirmishes with these Savages, in which they are generally defeated, But not without Loss on our Side.

By the List of disabled officers (many of whom are of Rank) you may perceive, Sir, that the Army is much weaken'd—By the Nature of the River, The most formidable part of the



Armament is deprived of the Power of acting ; Yet we have almost the whole Force of Canada to oppose.—In this situation, there is such a Choice of Difficultys, that I own myself at a Loss how to determine. The Affaires of Great Britain, I know, require the most vigorous Measures ; But then the Courage of a Handfull of brave Men should be exerted, only where there is some Hope of a favourable Event. However you may be assured, Sir, that the small part of the Campaign which remains, shall be employ'd (as far as I am able) for the Honour of His Majesty & the Interest of the Nation, In which I am sure of being well seconded by the Admiral & by the Generals. Happy, if our Efforts here can contribute to the Success of His Majesty's Arms in any other Parts of America.

I have the honour to be with the greatest Respect, Sir,  
Your most obedient and most humble Servant,

JAM : WOLFE.



## APPENDIX II

EXTRACTS from Montcalm's letter dated "Du Camp devant Quebec, 24 d'Août, 1759," and addressed to "M. de Molé, Premier Président au Parlement de Paris." The letter is in the British Museum, and is reprinted in full by Mr. Doughty, vol. ii, pp. 280-7.

Me voici, depuis plus de trois mois, aux prises avec Mons. Wolfe : il ne cesse, jour & nuit de bombarder Quebec, avec une furie, qui n'a guères d'exemple dans le siege d'un place, qu'on veut prendre & conserver. . . Aussi après trois mois de tentative, n'est-il pas avancé dans son dessein qu'au premier jour. Il nous ruine, mais il ne s'enrichit pas. . . . Il semble qu'après un si heureux prelude, la conservation de la colonie est presque assuré. Il n'en est cependant rien : la prise de Quebec depend d'un coup du main. Les Anglois sont maitres de la rivière ; ils n'ont qu'à effectuer une descente sur la rive, où cette ville, sans fortifications and sans défense, est située. Les voila en état de me presenter la bataille, que je ne pourrai plus refuser & que je ne devrai pas gagner. M. Wolfe, en effet, s'il entend son metier, n'a qu'à essayer le premier feu venir ensuite a grand pas sur mon armée, faire à bout parlant sa decharge, mes Canadiens, sans discipline, sourds à la voix du tambour & des instrumens militaires, derangés par cet escarre, ne sçauront plus reprendre eurs rangs. . . . Une assurance que je puis vous donner, c'est que je ne survivrois pas probablement à la perte de la colonie. Il est des situations où il ne reste plus à un général, que de perir avec honneur ; je crois y être ; &, sur ce point, je crois que jamais la postérité n'aura rien à reprocher à ma mémoire ; mais si la Fortune decida ma vie, elle ne decidera pas de mes sentimens—ils sont François & ils le seront, jusque dans le tombeau, si dans le tombeau on est encore quelque-chose. Je me consolerais du moins de ma defaite, & de la perte de la colonie, par l'intime persuasion où je suis, que cette defaite vaudroit un jour a ma patrie plus qu'une victoire and que le vainqueur en s'aggrandissant, trouveroit un tombeau dans son aggrandissement même. . . . Toutes ces colonies Angloises auroient, depuis longtemps, secoué le jong,

chaque province auroit formé une petite republique indépendante, si la crainte de voir les François a leur porte n'avoit été un frein qui les avoit retenu. . . . Si l'ancienns Angleterre, après avoir conquis le Canada sçavoit se l'attacher par la politique & les bienfaits & se le conserver à elle seule, si elle le laissoit à sa religion, à ses loix, à son langage, à ses coûtumes, à son ancien gouvernement, le Canada, divisé dans tous ces points d'avec les autres colonies, formeroit toujours un pais isolé qui n'enteroit jamais dans leurs interêts, ni dans leurs vuës, ne fut ce que par principe de religion : mais ce n'est pas là la politique Britannique. Les Anglois font ils une conquête, il faut qu'ils changent la constitution du pays, ils y portent leurs loix, leurs façons de penser, leur religion même, qu'ils font adopter sous peine, au moins, de privation des charges ; c'est-à-dire, de la privation de la qualité de citoyen. . . . En mot, êtes-vous vaincus, conquis par les Anglois ? Il faut devenir Anglois ! Mais les Anglois ne devraient-ils pas comprendre que les têtes des hommes ne sont pas toutes des têtes Angloises & sur tout d'esprits. . . . Chaque pays a ses arbres, ses fruits, ses richesses particuliers ; vouloir n'y transporter que les arbres, que les fruits d'Angleterre, seroit une ridicule impardonable. Il est de même des loix, qui doivent s'adapter aux climats ; parce que les hommes aux-mêmes tiennent beaucoup des climats . . . . Sur ce pied le Canada pris une fois par les Anglois, peu d'années suffiroient pour le faire devenir Anglois. Voilà les Canadiens transformés en politiques, en negocians, en hommes infatués d'une prétendue liberté, qui chez la populace tient souvent en Angleterre de la licence, and de l'anarchie. Adieu, donc, leur valeur, leur simplicité, leur generosité, leur respect pour tout ce qui est revêtu de l'autorité, leur frugalité, leur obéissance & leur fidelité ; c'est à-dire, ne seroient bien-tôt plus rien pour l'ancienne Angleterre & qu'ils seroient peut-être contre elle. Je suis si sur de ce que j'écris que je donnerai pas dix ans après la conquête de Canada pour en voir l'accomplissement.

## APPENDIX III

THE total strength of Wolfe's army present at the battle on the Plains of Abraham was 4,829 of all ranks, and 2 guns. Major Wood (*The Fight for Canada*, p. 225) gives the following interesting table—

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35th—"Otway's." Now 1st Bn. Royal Sussex ..	519
43rd—"Kennedy's." Now 1st Bn. Oxfordshire Light Infantry .. .. .	327
47th—"Lascelles'" Now 1st Bn. Loyal North Lancashire .. .. .	360
48th—"Webb's." Now 1st Bn. Northamptonshire..	683
58th—"Anstruther's." Now 2nd Bn. Northampton- shire .. .. .	335
2nd—Bn. Royal Americans—"Monckton's." Now 2nd Bn. King's Royal Rifle Corps .. ..	322
3rd Bn. Royal Americans—"Lawrence's." Now 3rd Bn. King's Royal Rifle Corps .. .. .	540
78th—"Fraser's." Now 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders	662
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	4,829
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